British Scholarship ~~on~~ AND Muslim Rule in India: The work of William Erskine, Sir Henry M. Elliot, John Dowson, Edward Thomas, J. Talboys Wheeler and Henry G. Keene

by

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Abstract

This thesis studies British scholarship of the mid and late nineteenth century relating to Muslim rule in India, looking particularly at William Erskine, Henry Miers Elliot, John Dowson, Edward Thomas, James Talboys Wheeler and Henry George Keene.

The first chapter deals with Erskine whose rationalist Scottish education and familiarity with romantic writers give him an intellectual kinship with earlier historians. His specialisation in medieval Indian history, however, connects him with Elliot,the subject of the second chapter, whose ideas and assumptions were radically different. Elliot was thoroughly conservative and imperialist and his views on Indo-Muslim history were largely coloured by practical political considerations. Such considerations were absent from Dowson's work which consisted in completing Elliot's work: this and the circumstances leading to publication are discussed in the third chapter. Thomas's pioneer work on Indo-Muslim numismatics and his statistical study of the Mughal revenues are analysed in the fourth chapter. In the fifth, Wheeler is shown to have projected his interpretation of '1857' onto his medieval Muslim history. This is seen to have given consistency to his apparently enigmatic treatment. In the final chapter Keene is shown to have provided a new interpretation of Indian history, influenced by Spencer

and Maine, without quite being able to reconcile their ideas with his findings. In this he is seen to epitomise the conceptual limitations of these scholars.

Despite changing influences and techniques, the period under study is a distinctive phase. This was emphasized when progressive accumulation of materials led to the first general Indian history written by a medieval specialist.

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Abbreviations

B.M. British Museum

Bibliographical Index - H.M. Elliot's Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Muhammedan India, Calcutta 1849

C.R. The Calcutta Review

IOL India Office Library

JASB Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

JBBRAS Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society

JRAS Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland

Numismatic Chronicle - The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Numismatic Society (London).

Supplemental Glossary - H.M. Elliot's Supplemental Glossary of Indian Terms A-J, Agra 1845

Contents

Introduction

In recent years there has been considerable and growing interest in Indian historiography.[1] But of the studies and

[1] This may be seen from the following works published since 1960
Hardy, P. Historians of Medieval India, London 1960.
Philips, C.H. (ed.) Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, London 1961.
Hasan, M. (ed.) Historians of Medieval India, Meerut 1968.
Mukherjee, S.N. Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India, Cambridge 1968.
Majumdar, R.C. Historiography in Modern India, London 1970.
Grewal, J.S. Muslim Rule in India: The Assessment of British Historians, Oxford University Press 1970.
Marshall, P.J. British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge University Press 1970.
Voigt, J.H. 'Indian Historical Writing in English, 1870-1920, with special reference to the influence of Nationalism', a D.Phil thesis in Oxford University, 1967-68.
Besides these major works several articles have also been published. Some of the more important ones are - P. Hardy's 'Mahmud of Ghazna and the Historians' Journal of the Panjab University Historical Society, Lahore, December 1962, pp. 1-36; Margaret H. Case's 'The Historical Craftsmanship of W.H. Moreland', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. II (1965) pp. 245-58; Johannes H. Voigt's 'British Policy towards Indian Historical Research and Writing, 1870-1930', ibid, Vol. III, pp. 137-49; Romila Thapar's 'Interpretations of Ancient Indian History', History and Theory, 1968, pp. 318-335.

articles which have appeared only J.S. Grewal's Muslim Rule in India: The Assessment of British Historians deals in some depth with British historical writing on Muslim rule in India.[1] It traces in consecutive order the development of British attitudes from the publication in 1768 of Alexander Dow's History of Hindostan to the appearance in 1841 of Mountstuart Elphinstone's History of India, the last major work on Indian history by a British scholar before the publication of Elliot's Bibliographical Index.

The present study is a sequel to British Historians in so far as it takes up the writings of British scholars from the point where British Historians ends. However, the methodology employed and the nature of materials used in the present study are very different from those used by the author of British Historians. This is despite the fact that this work was intended to be modelled on Grewal's. Prof. Grewal was primarily interested in analysing the work of historians largely in terms of intellectual influences, occasionally relating their writings to contemporary political developments in India. He was completely indifferent to the historians social backgrounds and the impact of their social

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[1] Hereafter Grewal's work will be cited simply as British Historians. In addition part of Dr. P. Hardy's 'Reflections on Trends and Methods' in his Historians of Medieval India deal with British historiography on medieval India. Also there are some relevant articles in C.H. Philips, op. cit. and M. Hasan, op. cit.

circumstances on their historical writings - an aspect which has greatly interested me. I have tried to ascertain in detail the exact nature of the scholars' Indian experiences (that is, if they had any) and the relevance and significance of those experiences for their studies. Closely related to this has been my attempt to pin-point my scholars' practical political motivations and the impact of those motivations on their treatment and interpretation of medieval India. Lastly, with regard to analysis in terms of intellectual influences, my method has been to trace the ideas of scholars to specific writers and thinkers instead of assigning them to various schools of thought in general terms. An essential aspect of the intellectual analysis has been to construct the historians' concepts of history independent of their writings on medieval India in order to ascertain how far their work on medieval India followed from their general notions of history.

Regarding the materials, I have read extensively in the scholars' personal papers wherever available. Erskine's Diary[1], several other volumes of his papers in the British Museum and the India Office Library, three volumes of his correspondence[2] and many more letters by him to be

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[1] Add. MS. 39,945 (British Museum).

[2] Adv. MSS. 36.1.5-7. National Library of Scotland.

found in his friends' collections in the National Library of Scotland as well as in the India Office Library have been used for the first time. Similarly Elliot Papers - specifically his correspondence and various drafts of his Bibliographical Index - in the British Museum have been used for the first time. Without the first draft of his Bibliographical Index it would not have been possible to know that Elliot's controversial preface to his Bibliographical Index passed through two distinct phases. There are no extant papers of Dowson, Thomas, Wheeler and Keene. But a thorough search of many libraries has enabled me to find letters by or concerning them scattered over various collections in Britain. Besides such manuscript materials, I have made a very considerable use of the India Office Records both for biographical information and other purposes. Wills of scholars and of their families have often yielded information where other sources have failed.

The choice of the period or of the scholars for this study is not arbitrary. Erskine, Elliot, Dowson, Thomas, Wheeler and Keene are the major scholars of this period to have written on medieval Muslim India. Moreover, they fairly represent the general trends in contemporaneous British scholarship on the subject. Elliot, for instance, represents (and influenced) that growing interest in historical sources in Oriental languages that found expression in the

Bibliotheca Indica Series. Wheeler's extensive use of travel literature was almost concurrent with the bringing out of new editions of European travel accounts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The period selected for studying possesses a unity of its own with Elliot's Bibliographical Index marking the beginning of a new phase in the nineteenth-century British exploration of medieval Muslim India. It is not so much, as it has been suggested recently, Elliot's 'scathing criticism and aggressive contempt' of Indo-Muslim rule[1], as his concentration on aspects of Indo-Muslim history, namely, Indo-Persian historical literature, that signifies the opening of a new phase in British study of Indo-Muslim history. Specialised study of Indo-Muslim history, an interest Elliot shared with Erskine, Thomas and Keene, was a new development in British historical writing.

Most British historians of the earlier period had studied or intended to study the history of Muslim rule in India as a part of general history of India or else their interest had been confined to the recent past having significance for the establishment of British rule in India.

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[1] Grewal, British Historians, pp. xiii-xiv; Grewal, 'Characteristics of Early British Historical Writing on Medieval India', Historians of Medieval India (ed. M. Hasan), Meerut, 1968, p. 231.

William Francklin's The History of the Reign of Shaw Aulum (London 1798) falls in the latter category while James Mill, G.R. Gleig and Mountstuart Elphinstone had all studied Indo-Muslim history as part of their general histories of India. Alexander Dow, who concentrated on the Indo-Muslim period, had yet intended to cover the entire Indian history upto the time of the Mughals as it was apparent from the title of his history - History of Hindostan from the Earliest Account of Time to the Death of Akbar. Similarly John Briggs had intended to be a general historian of India.[1] Francis Gladwin was the only notable exception.

Elliot's Bibliographical Index introduced yet another new element in the British exploration of medieval Muslim India. His was the first systematic and large scale attempt to discover and to make known to European scholars Indo-Persian sources of medieval Indian history. H. Blochmann aptly remarked that before the appearance of Elliot's Bibliographical Index 'but little was done for determining the sources from which the history of the Muhammadan period should be compiled.'[2] This is not to deny that before Elliot there had been efforts to bring to light sources of Indian history. Such efforts are manifest, for instance, in Charles

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[1] British Historians, p. 114

[2] 'Badaoni and his Works', JASB, Vol. XXXVIII, 1868, p. 107.

Stewart's A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippoo Sultan of Mysore (Cambridge 1809) or in articles such as 'Bibliothecal Notices of Important Collections, in India and the East.'[1] These are, however, isolated attempts to delve into the sources of Indian history. Similarly, translations before Elliot's time of some important Indo-Persian historical works - for examples, David Price's Memoirs of the Emperor Jahangueir (1829), John Brigg's translation of Firishtah or Charles Stewart's translation of Jauhar's Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat - were the results of isolated individual attempts and not of any systematised and comprehensive plan of finding new sources for Indo-Muslim history. Furthermore, the work of these scholars failed to establish any strong tradition of concentrated research in Persian sources of medieval Indian history.

Elliot, by virtue of his single-minded attention to the study of Indo-Persian historical literature, succeeded in establishing a strong tradition of research on the subject of his interest. W.N. Lees (1825-1889), himself an eminent Oriental scholar and for several years in charge of selecting Persian histories for the Bibliotheca Indica Series, was to comment in 1864, 'The present object of the Society (Asiatic

[1] Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. I, 1841-44, pp. 448-61.

Society of Bengal) in regard to the Persian series of the Bibliotheca Indica, is to aid in working out an idea which originated with the late distinguished Sir Henry Elliot, viz., to place in the hands of the future historian the best original material for compiling a history of this country (India)'.[1]

But although Elliot's work was the first to appear Erskine is the subject of our first chapter. Erskine's History of India under the two first sovereigns of the House of Taimur: Baber and Humayun though published five years after Elliot's Bibliographical Index, had been completed by the time Elliot started to work on his Bibliographical Index. Erskine moreover deserves to be treated first on account of his closeness - by way of ideas and close personal association - to Elphinstone, who, in the words of Professor Grewal, 'summed up the knowledge as well as the purposes, assumptions or attitudes' of many British historians of the earlier period.'[2]

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[1] 'Materials for the History of India for the six hundred years of Mohammadan Rule previous to the foundation of the British Empire', JRAS, Vol. III (1868), p. 420.

[2] British Historians, p. 163.

William Erskine

Indian studies engaged William Erskine's attention for the greater part of his long life (1773-1852). His periodical contributions,[1] the translation of the Memoirs of Babur,[2] and the History of India under the two first sovereigns of the House of Taimur: Baber and Humayun[3] form a major contribution to Indian historiography. Yet his work has so far not received the due that, intrinsically, it merits. It is a measure of the ignorance of Erskine's scholarship amongst modern historians that in a recent important work on British historical writing on Muslim India, Erskine's Indian studies have been dismissed with a rather curt general comment.[4] This

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[1] During his stay in India Erskine contributed five scholarly articles to the Literary Society of Bombay. These were later published in the first three volumes of the Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, 1819-23.

[2] Memoirs of Zehir-ed-din Muhammed Baber, translated partly by the late John Leyden, partly by William Erskine with Notes and a Geographical and Historical Introduction, London 1826. This work has been abridged as the Memoirs. References are to the original edition of 1826 unless any other edition is mentioned specifically.

[3] It was published posthumously in 1854 (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans). Hereafter this work will be cited as the House of Taimur.

[4] British Historians, pp. 111-112.

is despite the fact that Erskine's major work falls well within the period of study selected for the British Historians.[1]

It has not been possible to ascertain whether Erskine was interested in Indian studies before going to India. Erskine's family had a long association with India. Erskine's great grandfather had been a director of the African and Indian Company in 1695.[2] His own brother David had been in India since 1787.[3] Besides Erskine maintained a correspondence with his friend James Welsh who had gone to India in 1790[4]. In any event Erskine began to promote European writing on India immediately after his arrival in India. He began by actively seconding Sir James Mackintosh's[5] proposal for founding a

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[1] As we shall see later, Erskine began his Indo-Muslim studies soon after his arrival in India and continued these, with interruptions, till 1840s. His House of Taimur was written by 1845, four years before the publication of Elliot's Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Mohammedan India which is seen by J.S. Grewal as marking a new era in British historical writing on Muslim India.

[2] Chambers, R. Lives of Illustrious and Distinguished Scotsmen, 1833, Vol. II, p. 258.

[3] vide India Registers. Also Erskine's Diary, extracts from correspondence between David and William Erskine at the end. Add MS., 39, 945. B.M.

[4] Adv. MSS 36.1.6. National Library of Scotland. This contains a few letters from James Welsh to William Erskine. It is not possible to give the exact reference as the manuscript is not paginated.

[5] Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832) - educated at Aberdeen and Edinburgh. In 1787 he completed his diploma in medicine from Edinburgh, but never practised medicine. In 1788 he moved to London where he was called to the Lincoln's Inn in 1795. While studying for bar, he had written the Vindiciae Gallicae (1791) in reply to Burke's Reflections

(cont'd on next page)

literary society in Bombay,[1] which came to fruition in November 1804. He was its first secretary, a position which he held till 1815.[2] In 1818 we again find Erskine holding the office of secretary to the society.[3] He subseqnently held the office

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on the French Revolution. Vindiciae Gallicae had immediate success and it speedily went through three editions. This brought Mackintosh into prominence in Whig circles. In 1799-1800 he delivered a course of thirty-nine lectures on 'The Law of Nature and Nations', which were attended by some prominent statesmen. Later he joined the Norfolk circuit where he did good business and established his reputation as an eloquent speaker. In 1803 he accepted an offer from Addington of the recordership of Bombay where he stayed till 1811. In 1812 he was offered a seat in parliament. He supported Romilly's attempt to reform criminal law. He vigorously opposed the repressive measures which followed the peace, the 'Seditious Meeting Bill' of 1817, the 'Six Acts', and the 'Alien Bill'. In 1818 Mackintosh was appointed to the professorship of law and politics at the East India College, Haileybury from which he resigned in 1824. In 1827 he was made a privy councillor. He died on 30 May 1832.

Mackintosh was a regular contributor to the Edinburgh Review He also published a short History of England for which he was allowed to examine the Stuart papers then at Carlton House. But his most important work was the 'Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy' for the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

[1] JRAS, Vols XIV-XV (1851-55), Annual Report, p.iv.

[2] Journal Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society, Centenary Volume, 1905, pp 19, 30.

[3] vide Malcolm's letter of 10th July 1818 to Erskine, Home Miscellaneous Series (IOL) H/733, pp. 313-14.

of Vice-President for some time before quitting India in 1823.[1] As the Secretary of the Society he made serious efforts to encourage Indian studies. In the words of Mountstuart Elphinstone, it is to Erskine's 'unremitting and judicious exertions' that the formation and prosperity of the Society must be principally attributed.[2] He also assisted considerably in preparing the Transactions of the Society for the press in 1819 even though he was not then holding any office in it.

Erskine's own earliest tentative researches were directed towards the history and culture of the region where he was living in India, namely Gujrat. By February 1805, we find him making enquiries about the Mirat-i-Sikandari.[3] He was equally keen to learn about the Parsees.[4] Later he actively participated in Mackintosh's scheme for a comparative vocabulary of Indian languages. Indeed, he seems to have been in charge of the whole scheme[5]. By 1809 he was engaged on a

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[1] 'Brief Memorial of the Literary Researches of the late William Erskine', Journal Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. IV (1852-53), p. 277.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Copy of a letter from Major David Price to Erskine - MSS. Eur. C.10 - Oriental History and Antiquities, pp. 557-59 IOL.

[4] Loc.cit.

[5] This is suggested by some letters interspersed in his manuscript 'consisting chiefly of alphabets, vocabularies, etc., of the Mahratti, Sindi, Kashmiri, Purshtoo or Afghan, Chinese, Javanese and other languages' B.M. Add. MS. 26,605. See especially ff. 34-35, 54, 57, 63, 67.

history of Aurangzib.[1] About the same time he translated a part of Babur's Memoirs[2], which he completed by 1816[3], but which could not be published until 1826, after his return to Britain.

Erskine's return to Britain in 1823 was followed by a hiatus in his academic activities, but after seeing the translation of the Memoirs through the press in 1826, he resumed them in 1827, at the beginning of a three-year stay in France, during which period he met and corresponded with French orientalists.[4] His return to Britain in 1831 was followed by another hiatus. In 1833, however, he started work on completing Malcolm's unfinished Life of Clive[5] and by assisting Robert Mackintosh in bringing out the Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honorable Sir James Mackintosh.[6]

It was in April 1835 that he seriously started on the House of Taimur.[7] By February 1836 he had finished a 'rough

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f.1.

[2] Memoirs, Preface, p. x.

[3] Erskine's Diary, f. 7 (reverse)

[4] Ibid, ff. 66-68.

[5] Malcolm, Sir John, The Life of Robert, Lord Clive, 3 Vols, London, 1836.

[6] Erskine's Diary, ff. 29, 30, 33; Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur. F.88, Box 3F, Packets 34, 38, 43; Colebrooke, T.E. Life of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, London 1884, II, pp. 340-41.

[7] Erskine's Diary, f.30; Erskine's letters to Elphinstone dated 17th April 1835, 11th May 1835, Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur. F88, Box 3F, Packet 43.

sketch' of Humayun's reign down to his expulsion from India.[1] In September he was revising a part of the account of Babur and had finished that of Humayun. In May 1837 he was collecting materials from Persian histories for an account of Akbar's reign [2] - a subject which engaged him intermittently for a year and a half.[3] Without writing a history of Akbar's reign, Erskine proceeded to collect materials for Jahangir and Aurangzib. He spent a considerable time translating portions of Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri and Khwafi Khan.[4] After a break in his Indo-Muslim studies in 1839-40, Erskine began by revising his account of Babur and Humayun.[5] Simultaneously, he continued extracting materials from Persian sources for the history of other Mughal rulers. With several intermissions he finally prepared the first two volumes for publication in 1845. Elphinstone approached Murray with a proposal to publish Erskine's House of Taimur, but Murray declined.[6]

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f.31 (reverse)

[2] Ibid, f.36.

[3] Ibid, ff. 37-40.

[4] His translation of the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri is in the British Museum, Add. MS. 26, 611.

[5] Erskine's Diary, ff. 43-44.

[6] Elphinstone Papers, MSS, Eur. F.88, Box 4D, Packet 19, Erskine's Letter to Elphinstone dated 4th August 1845; Erskines' Diary, f. 45.

Instead of revising 'Babur' and 'Humayun' for publication, Erskine continued with work on their successors, specially Akbar. As late as September 1847 we find him occupied with the Akbarnamah.[1] After 1847, however, his Indian studies fell in abeyance. This was partly due to his bad eye-sight which continually grew worse - he was suffering from cataract. He died in May 1852 without completing his history of the Mughals in India. He left behind him a huge collection of materials - translations of Persian sources - and manuscripts of two volumes covering the reigns of Babur and Humayun.[2] These latter were posthumously published in 1854 by Erskine's family at their own expense as A History of India under the two first sovereigns of the House of Taimur: Baber and Humayun.[3] Thus a

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f. 50.

[2] Erskine's huge collection of materials is to be found in the British Museum and India Office Library. B.M. Add. MSS. 26, 606-16 contain translations of parts of Akbar-namah. 'The Tezekereh al Vakait' or private Memoirs of the Mughal Emperor Humayun, Tarikh-i-Badauni, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Tarikh-i-Rashidi and Khwafi Khan and Aurangzib's letters. In the IOL we find parts of Tabaqat-i-Akbari (MSS. Eur. C.9. pp. 127-222), Khwafi Khan (MSS. Eur. C.10. Oriental History and Antiquities, pp. 39-161), Alamgir-namah (Ibid, pp. 327-335), Akbar-namah (MSS. Eur. B.5. Indian Notes), Tarikh-i-Sind (MSS. Eur. A.3). . The last manuscript also contains descriptions of some Persian books on poetry, history, mythology, philosophy and religion. See pp. 1-9, 15-67, 68-69, 74-75, 77, 86-87.

[3] Maitland Erskine's letter of 28th June 1854 to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Papers (IOL), MSS. Eur. F88, Box 5B, Packet 17.

work he had begun during the early years of his residence in India, and on which he had been engaged intermittently for forty years, was only partially realised and that too after his death.

Erskine was no James Mill, a writer on India who not only had never set foot there, but also who boasted of not having done so. He spent twenty years (1804-1823) in India, mainly in Bombay, but with visits to some other parts of the country. In 1808 he visited the Kanara caves.[1] In 1809 he visited his brother David and friend Dr.John Leyden in Bengal.[2] On his way back to Bombay he stopped at Madras and visited architectural remains in the vicinity of the city.[3] In 1820 he travelled in the Deccan and saw the Ellora caves.[4]

Erskine's decision to go to India in December 1803 was precipitate but not altogether out of the course of his life as it had begun to run earlier. William Erskine was the sixth child of David Erskine and Jean Melvin.[5] David Erskine was a

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[1] Adv. MSS.36.1.5. National Library of Scotland. This is mentioned in Erskine's brief sketch of W. Ellis.

[2] Leyden Letters, MSS. 971, f.59; MS. 939 (Letters of or Concerning Leyden), a copy of Erskine's letter to Bishop Heber dated 16th January 1812, f. 79. National Library of Scotland.

[3] Adv. MSS. 36.1.5 - a letter from Lt. John Macleod to Erskine dated 8th July 1820. National Library of Scotland.

[4] 'Erskine, W. 'Observations on the Remains of the Bouddhists in India', Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, Vol. III, p. 494. This paper was read on 31st July, 1821.

[5] DNB, Supplement II, 1901, p. 190.

reputed writer to the Signet in Edinburgh in which profession he made some fortune and purchased the estate of Linlathen.[1] He came from a well-known Scottish family. David's great grandfather, Henry Erskine, Third Lord Cardoss (c. 1650-1693) was a Privy Councillor and General of the Mint after the Revolt in 1688.[2] David's grandfather - Colonel John Erskine of Carnock (1662-1743) was a member of the last Scottish parliament and after the union was nominated to a seat in the British Parliament.[3] His father - William Erskine's grandfather - John Erskine (1695-1768), of Carnock, afterwards of Cardoss, was professor of Scots law in the University of Edinburgh. He enjoyed a great reputation as a teacher and writer of books on Scottish law.[4] He possessed a very considerable landed property, the greater part of which descended to his son James Erskine of Cardoss, brother of David Erskine.[5] David's half brother - John Erskine (1721-1813) - was a very well known evangelical.[6]

William Erskine, however, never enjoyed the material benefits of his landed ancestry. HHe was a natural son of David

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[1] Ibid, Vol. VI (1921), p. 862. Hanna, W. (ed.) Letters of T. Erskine from 1800 to 1840, 1877, Vol. I. p.6.

[2] Chambers, Robert, Lives of Illustrious and Distinguished Scotsmen, Glasgow 1833, Vol. II, p. 237.

[3] Ibid, p. 258; Hanna, W. op. cit., pp. 1-3.

[4] Chambers, Robert, op. cit., pp. 258-60, DNB, Vol. VI, pp. 849-50.

[5] Chambers, Robert, op. cit., p. 260; Hanna, W. op. cit., p.6.

[6] Ibid, pp. 261-63; DNB, Vol. VI, pp. 850-51; Hanna, W. op.cit, pp. 5-6.

Erskine[1] and after his father's death the estate of Linlathen was inherited by Ann - David Erskine's wife - and her very young children.[2] This seems to have forced William Erskine to abandon his formal studies in order to support himself. His correspondence with his brother David during the five years following their father's death suggests that he experienced considerable financial hardship during this period.[3] In 1791 when David Erskine died, William had not yet completed his studies. He was then studying in the University of Edinburgh which he had entered in 1788 A.D.[4]

Abandoning his formal studies, Erskine became an apprentice to a friend of his father, a fellow writer to the Signet. He entered the legal profession contrary to his father's earlier desire. His father had destined him for the Presbyterian church where he had considerable influence probably through his half brother John.[5] Erskine preferred law despite

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[1] It may be pointed out that David Erskine married only after the death of Jean Melvin who may be regarded his 'unwedded wife'. Jean Melvin died in 1780 and David Erskine got married in April 1781. (Erskine's Diary, f.60; History of the Society of Writers to His Majesty's Signet, Edinburgh, 1936), It is probable that she was legally not free to marry David Erskine.

[2] DNB, Vol. VI (1921 ed.) p. 862.

[3] See especially his brother's letter of 21st February 1798, Erskine's Diary, f. 62 (reverse).

[4] Ibid, f.60.

[5] DNB, Supplement II, 1901, p. 191; Erskine's Diary, f.61.

the fact that it was considered 'slow of advancement' and that he could have been comfortably provided for in the church. He did not want to enter the church out of 'interested motives' and in the absence of any sense of vocation[1]. Even law was not his first choice. He entered the legal profession 'unwillingly' and never enjoyed what he considered to be a 'hated business', 'dull employment' and a profession 'injurious to principles'.[2] But 'there was perhaps no alternative'.[3] In 1788-89 he had been much inclined to study medicine but was probably dissuaded by his father's and brother's opinion that medicine did not offer bright prospects of a flourishing career.[4] After his father's death he lacked means of pursuing a profession the training for which was both prolonged and costly. Family considerations may have prevented his going to India or the West Indies where both his brothers were then engaged in trade. With four unmarried sisters, Erskine could have felt responsible for them and, therefore, obliged to stay in the country.[5]

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[1] vide David Erskine's letter of 1st February, 1797 to William Erskine, Erskine's Diary, f. 62.

[2] William Erskine's letters of 28th January 1796, 16th September 1796 and 25th October 1796 to a friend - Lundi MSS, No. 9847, ff. 162, 179-80, 181-83. National Library of Scotland.

[3] Ibid, f. 183 reverse.

[4] David Erskine (William Erskine's brother) to William Erskine 1790 - Erskine's Diary, f. 61.

[5] Such sentiments are expressed in David Erskine's letter to William Erskine. Ibid, ff. 61-62.

Despite his long apprenticeship (1792-97), Erskine never became a writer to the Signet (as has been erroneously suggested by H. Beveridge and writers of Erskine's obituary notices). He almost certainly lacked the means of establishing an independent practice.[1] His political views may also have inhibited him from becoming a writer to the Signet. He had radical leanings - in 1795-96 he was steeped in Godwinian intellectual radicalism[2] - while the Edinburgh Bar was predominantly Tory.[3] After seven years of legal training in Edinburgh, Erskine went to Dunse in 1799 as a factor[4] to Mr. Hay of Drummitise. With this, he hoped to combine practice as a country solicitor.[5] In Dunse his pay was only £60 per annum and his prospects were bleak.[6] Presumably he was not successful even as a country writer (solicitor). The legal profession at that time 'no longer constituted enough of a

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[1]This is especially suggested by his brother David's letter of 21st February 1798, Erskine's Diary, f. 62.

[2]See his long letter to an intimate friend - Lundi MSS., No. 9847, ff. 150-153. National Library of Scotland.

[3]Clive, John, Scotch Reviewers: The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1815, London, 1956, p. 27.

[4]A factor was more or less an estate supervisor doing miscellaneous duties including collection of rents.

[5]DNB, Supplement II, 1901, p. 191.

[6]Loc. cit.

source of income or advancement for the able and ambitious men on the wrong side of the political fence.'[1] Erskine's circumstances compelled him to return to Edinburgh in 1803. He returned there intending to study medicine.[2]

It was in these circumstances that he met Mackintosh within a fortnight after his return to Edinburgh in 1803. Mackintosh had then just been appointed the Recorder of Bombay and was due to sail for India in a few week's time. Much impressed by Erskine's 'taste for philosophical studies', Mackintosh offered to Erskine 'the first appointment in his gift.'[3] Erskine, dissatisfied with his present situation in life, and fearing perhaps that it might be too late to enter medicine, accepted Mackintosh's offer to accompany him to India. India presented him a chance to make money; his brother David had made a small fortune in India[4]. It ensured him of a good job as Mackintosh had all the patronage of his court and moreover in the Bombay Presidency ranked second after the Governor. For a person of Erskine's literary tastes,[5] the opportunity to associate intimately with Mackintosh

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[1] Clive, John, op. cit., p. 27.

[2] A letter of Francis Horner (dated 14th Nov., 1803) to James Reddie, James Reddie Letters, MS 3704, f.15. National Library of Scotland.

[3] DNB, Supplement II, p. 191.

[4] Later he was an indigo manufacturer in Bengal vide, India Registers.

[5] These will be discussed later in the chapter.

was one not to be foregone.

In February 1804 Erskine sailed with Mackintosh and his family for India.[1] He soon became an intimate literary and personal companion to Mackintosh who found comfort in Erskine's companionship amid the trials of official life in India. Mackintosh's high esteem of Erskine's literary acquirements may be seen from his remarks in a letter to one of his close friends. He writes, 'I had the good fortune to bring out with me a young Scotch gentleman, Mr. Erskine, who is one of the most amiable, ingenious and accurately informed men in the world.'[2] This friendship later burgeoned into a family relationship when Erskine married Mackintosh's second daughter, Maitland, in September 1809.

In India Erskine entered into other life-long relationships which were to play considerable role in his literary activities. He met Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1811[3] and soon there developed between them a close literary friendship which continued after their return to Britain. They maintained a correspondence, though sometimes at long intervals.[4] Another

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[1] Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh London 1834, Vol. I, p. 202.

[2] Ibid, p. 331. See also, Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner, M.P., edited by Leonard Horner, London 1853, (2nd. ed.) Vol. I, p. 324.

[3] Colebrooke, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 258.

[4] See Elphinstone Papers, MSS Eur. F.88. Erskine's letters to Elphinstone in various boxes and packets. After 1826 they resumed their correspondence in 1832.

literary acquaintance was General Malcolm. His esteem for Erskine's talents was such that he sought Erkine's opinion on most of his literary work.[1] To quote Malcolm 'There is no man whose opinion upon the performance I shall be more anxious to hear than your own (Erskines).'[2] Again, 'your remarks on this as on other subjects are invaluable.'[3] Erskine also knew James Grant Duff, the famous historian of the Marathas[4] and John Wilks, who later wrote a work on Mysore.[5] John Briggs and Vans Kennedy were amongst Erskine's friends.[6] He had close contact with Henry Russell, who was then the British Resident at Hyderabad and who often supplied Persian manuscripts to Erskine.[7]

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[1] Malcolm Letters. Adv. MSS. 36.1.7. National Library of Scotland. With the exception of a few letters, most of these are addressed to Erksine. See, for instance, Malcolm's letters dated December 15, 1811, January 10, 1816, July 28th 1819, March 21, 1826. The manuscript is not paginated and hence no exact references are possible. See also Erskine's Diary, f.6.

[2] Ibid, letter of 10th January, 1816.

[3] Ibid, letter dated 21st Mary, 1826.

[4] Erskine's Diary, f.6 (reverse). He was then reading Grant Duff's work on Marathas for comments and suggestions. See also Duff's letter of 1822 to Mrs. Erskine, Adv. MSS. 36.1.6. National Library of Scotland.

[5] In 1811 he was reading Wilks' work presumably for suggestions. Erskine's Diary, f.6.

[6] He knew John Briggs as early as 1811, ibid, f.55. For his association with Vans Kennedy, see, 'Observations on the Remains of the Bouddhists in India', Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, III, p. 533, n.

[7] See Henry Russell's letters to Erskine in the Adv. Mss. 36.1.6. National Library of Scotland.

Several official duties which Mackintosh's influence opened for Erskine were exclusively judicial. He began as Mackintosh's secretary and later held the posts of registrar in the Court of Vice Admirality and Clerk of the Small Causes and Seals.[1] In 1812 Erskine was appointed one of the Stipendiary Magistrates of Police in Bombay at a salary of 18000 rupees per annum[2]. He gained this appointment when a revision in the police department was carried out at the suggestion of Mackintosh; the offices of superintendent and deputy-superintendent were abolished and two stipendiary magistrates were recommended in their place.[3] Erskine's jurisdiction extended over the Island of Bombay excluding the fort and harbour.[4] In 1820 Erskine was made Master in Equity in the Recorder's Court by Sir William David Evans.[5] In Erskine's words, Sir William Evans 'had taken a particular attachment to me from my fondness of some pursuits and studies that were like his own.'[6] Also he was nominated one of the committee of three which was set up for drafting Bombay code of regulations.[7] Elphinstone, who was then the governor of Bombay Presidency, found the 'great security for the efficiency

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[1] vide India Register, years 1805-12.
[2] Personal Records O/6/13 (IOL) p. 367.
[3] Ibid, O/6/5, pp. 79-84.
[4] Ibid, p. 82.
[5] DNB, Supplement II, 1901, p. 191.
[6] Adv. MSS. 36.1.5. National Library of Scotland
[7] DNB, Supplement II, 1901, p. 191.

of this committee . . in the character of Mr. Erskine.'[1] However, his career was soon to experience an anti-climax. In 1823 he was removed from his office of the Master of Equity by the new chief justice on a charge of large-scale embezzelment.[2]

Whether or not Erskine was guilty of the charges brought against him cannot be now established. There were strong speculations at the time that Sir Edward West had acted out of interested motives.[3] It is likely that Erskine, due to bad health[4] and pressure of work as a member of the committee for drafting code of regulations for Bombay Presidency had neglected his official duties and that his subordinates, taking advantage of the situation, had embezzled money. In any event, Erskine's honesty was considered beyond doubt by Europeans in Bombay.[5] However, he was allowed to leave India

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[1] Colebrooke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 117.

[2] Douglas, James, Glimpses of Old Bombay and Western India with other Papers, London 1900, pp. 33-34; DNB, Supplement II, 1901, p. 191.

[3] Ibid, It may be pointed out that Erskine's office was bestowed by Sir Edward West on his own nephew.

[4] It is not clear what was the nature of Erskine's illness, but some of his friends' letters show that they were quite concerned about his health. See, for instance, General Malcolm's letter to Mrs. Erskine. He writes, 'I have been quite disturbed to hear of Erskine's last attack.' Adv. MSS, 36.1.7. National Library of Scotland.

[5] Douglas, Glimpses of Old Bombay, pp. 33-34. See also the address presented to Erskine by European residents of Bombay, JBBAS, Vol. IV, pp. 276-77; JRAS, Vols XIV-XV, Annual Report, p. iii. Similar sentiments are expressed in a letter of 15th June 1825 from General Alexander Walker to Erskine, Adv. MSS., 36.1.6. National Library of Scotland.

only after he had found two securities for fifty thousand rupees and himself had given a personal bond for a hundred thousand rupees.[1] In 1823 he returned to Britain *via* China.[2]

After his return to Britain Erskine resided in Edinburgh for a few years and saw the *Memoirs* through the Press in 1826. In the middle of 1827 he repaired to Pau in France where he stayed till 1831, with two visits to Britain and one to Italy.[3] Returning to his homeland in 1831, Erskine took up residence at Blackburn House, Westlothian.[4] In 1835 he moved to St. Andrews[5] where he became the Provost of the University in 1836, but which he resigned the following year.[6] In 1839 he was again on the move - this time to the metropolis of Scotland where he spent the next five years of his life.[7] In 1844 he moved to Germany finally to return to Edinburgh in 1847.[8] He lived in Edinburgh till his death in May 1852.[9]

Erskine's removal from his post in 1823, financial considerations, family responsibilities and his social habits

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[1] Douglas, *Glimpses of Bombay*, p. 34.

[2] *DNB*, Supplement II, 1901, p.191; *JRAS*, Vols. XXIV-XV, Annual Report, p.iii.

[3] *Erskine's Diary*, ff. 10, 18, 26, 28, 64.

[4] *Ibid*, ff. 26-27. Blackburn House was a late eighteenth century Georgian House - *List of Buildings of Architectural or historic interest*.

[5] *Erskine's Diary*, f.30.

[6] Erskine's letter of 15th June 1837 to Elphinstone, *Elphinstone Papers*, MSS, Eur.f.88. Box 3G, Packet 49; *Erskine's Diary*, f.37.

[7] *Ibid*,, f.42 (reverse)

[8] *Ibid*, f. 50.

[9] *DNB*, Supplement II, 1901, p. 192.

lay behind his unsettled and migratory existence after his return to Britain in 1823. These circumstances, in turn, directly affected the course of his life as a scholar. He could not settle down to any literary or other work for nearly four years after leaving Bombay under a cloud. This was a period of 'sadness and sorrow unmixed .. so full of horror and suffering.'[1] As late as 1827 he despaired 'what appeared to be impossibilities have occurred. My peace of mind and station are gone for ever.'[2] During the period between 1823-27 his mind had been 'restless' and he had 'moved a great deal' probably in an attempt to settle down quietly and respectably.[3] Under these circumstances, it was a desire for a complete change of scene which induced him to go to France.[4] An additional inducement was that "I may be

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f. 10

[2] Loc. cit.'

[3] Erskine's letter of 11th March 1826 to Elphinstone, MSS.Eur. F. 88, Box 7D, Packet No. 4. IOL.

[4] His state of mind may be gleaned from a letter he wrote to an intimate friend just before leaving for France. He writes 'when far from home and in trouble, we naturally turn to our native country as the land of ease and enjoyment; one hopes to fly eagerly thither, as to one natural and proper place of rest. I have now spent three years in it, years of sadness and suffering, whether a foreign climate and country may perform the promise in which home has failed remains to be tried', Lundi Letters, MS. 9848, f. 178 (reverse), National Library of Scotland.

able to afford to my daughters a better education abroad than I could give them in this country, the Paradise of the rich, but certainly not a favourable land for needy annuitants.'[1] Indeed, financial and family considerations were often behind Erskine's changes of residence. He moved out of Blackburn House, chiefly for the sake of his children's education.[2] St. Andrews was preferred to Edinburgh since for the latter 'the expenses I fear would be beyond our means.'[3] Financial reasons were behind his taking up residence in Germany. In his diary he notes 'My pecuniary circumstances have compelled me to leave home.'[4]

Erskine's financial problems arose from his having a very large family and from his maintaining a higher standard of living than his means permitted rather than from an uncertain income.[5] He owned some indigo shares in India.[6]

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[1] Loc. cit.,

[2] Erskine to Reddie, James Reddies Letters, MS.3704,f.114, National Library of Scotland.

[3] Ibid, f.114 (reverse)

[4] Erskine's Diary, f.45

[5] Ibid, f. 42 (reverse). In September 1839 he notices - 'Narrow means are always painful - but if not joined with a determination to keep independent and to renounce those habits that lead to an expence beyond those means - are destructive of comfort and of happiness of every kind.' It may be pointed out that Erskine fathered fourteen children two of whom died in 1834.

[6] Ibid., f.64.

Even prior to 1820 he had invested money in some business in Britain and made considerable profits[1]. He had landed property in Britain, most probably in Scotland.[2] He had 'some funds invested in mortgate in New South Wales and in six percent bonds of the Illinois Michigan Canal Debt.'[3] He, thus, appears to have had not an inconsiderable fortune. In January 1832 he was worried about 'one canker working inwards to consume' their happiness ; it was 'the habit year after/of year breaking in upon our principal and making it less and less. Long it cannot go on without ruin.'[4] He spent beyond his means partly 'for the vain folly of counting appearances' and partly because of his and his family's fondness for social life.[5] They had gone to Germany so that away from friends and relations they could live more economically. But, 'I have attained no one purpose of coming here. Our expenses still exceed our income and the love of

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[1]Edward Nash's letter of 20th February 1820 to Erskine contains information that some concern owned jointly by Nash and Erskine was proving profitable to Erskine. Adv.Mss. 36.1.6. National Library of Scotland.

[2]In his letters to his friend James Reddie there are references to this effect. See for instance, ff. 114-115, 122, James Reddie's Letters, MS 3704. National Library of Scotland.

[3]vide Erskine's will - Prob. 11/2160. Public Records Office.

[4]Erskine's Diary, ff. 28 (reverse)-29.

[5]Erskine's Diary, ff. 42 (reverse), 48 (reverse)

pleasure and excitement rushes blindforth into every expence ... Habit is a second nature which ceases to be under control of reason.'[1]

Every change of residence, whether necessitated by family responsibilities or financial considerations, interrupted Erskine's literary work. The problems of finding residence, packing, unpacking were always time consuming and often replete with confusion. The inevitable consequence of all this was long disruptions in his studies.[2] His family responsibilities interfered with his studies in yet another way. He spent considerable time on his children's education. Evenings were often devoted to readings with his family.[3] Then his sons had to be settled in life.[4] Thus, for instance, a long break in studies was necessitated by making arrangements for his son James Claudius's entry to Haileybury.[5] Again, when he was seriously absorbed with his House of Taimur in Germany, he not only had to make two trips to England on account of his son's admission and then his studies - he was faring badly at

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[1] Ibid, f.48 (reverse)

[2] See, for instance, Erskine's letters of 17th November 1835, 9th March 1840 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL), Boxes 3F and 4A, packets 43 and 5 respectively.

[3] This is evident throughout his diary.

[4] Erskine's Diary, ff. 40, 48 (reverse)

[5] Ibid, f. 40.

his studies - at Haileybury, but also had to devote a good deal of time teaching him languages and other subjects.[1]

Erskine often helped others in their literary activities at the cost of his own. Sir John Malcolm, of all Erskine's friends, made many literary demands on him and often - on Malcolm's own admission - but poorly acknowledged his assistance.[2] Erskine completed the third volume of Malcolm's Life of Clive, but this is not acknowledged openly in that work.[3] In 1848-49 we find Erskine helping another friend the time he would have otherwise spent at least partly on the House of Taimur.[4]

For the House of Taimur there were some inherent difficulties in the undertaking which prevented its completion. But before we discuss this aspect of Erskine's project, it is desirable to analyse the beginnings, gradual development and direction of his interest in Indian studies. It was his intellectual eagerness and literary inclinations very much in keeping with his earlier life, that led him to Indian studies.

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[1] See Erskine's letter of 21st January 1845 to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Papers: MSS. Eur. F.88, Box 4C, Packet 18 (IOL); Erskine's Diary, ff. 48 (reverse), 50.

[2] This comes out very strongly from a collection of Malcolm's letters - mostly to Erskine - preserved in the National Library of Scotland. Malcolm Letters, Adv. MSS., 36.1.7.

[3] See the 'Advertisement' to Malcolm's Life of Clive, Vol. I, p.viii.

[4] Erskine's letters to Miss Stuart dated 2nd Nov., 1848, 8th March 1849 - Add.MS. 34046, ff. 274-76. B.M.

Erskine had formally studied at the University of Edinburgh between 1788 and 1792.[1] He had, however, continued his literary activities zealously even after becoming an apprentice to a writer to the Signet. He was an active participant in young literary circles in Edinburgh. He was a member of the Junior Literary Society out of which grew, in 1797, the Academy of Physics. The latter was a more and intimate select group than the former.[2] Besides Erskine, Thomas Brown (1778-1820)[3], Francis Horner (1778-1817), John Leyden (1775-1811),[4] James Reddie (1773-1852)[5], Henry Brougham (1778-1868), and Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850) were

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f.60.

[2] Reith, John, Life of Dr. John Leyden, Poet and Linguist, Gala shiels, n.d. p.153.

[3] He was the Professor of Moral Philosophy from 1810 onwards in the University of Edinburgh. He succeeded Dugald Stewart.

[4] Physician, poet and linguist. He went to India in 1803. At first he had charge of the Madras general hospital, but was later appointed the professor of Hindustani in the Calcutta College. In 1809 he was appointed commissioner of the court of requests in Calcutta. In 1810 he was appointed assay-master of the mint of Calcutta, and in 1811 he accompanied Lord Minto to 'Java 'to assist in settling the country when conquered, and as interpreter for the Malay language'. He died on August 28, 1811 - DNB, Vol. XXXIII, 1893, pp. 215-16.

[5] He was the author of the following legal works - Inquiries, Elementary and Historical, on the Science of Law, London 1840, An Historical View of the Law of Maritime Commerce, London 1841; Inquiries into International Law, London 1842; Researches, Historical and Critical, in Maritime International Law, Edinburgh 1844.

amongst the members of the Academy of Physics. All of them were later to attain eminence as scholars, politicians, lawyers, poets and critics. Horner, Brougham and Jeffrey were amongst the four founders of the Edinburgh Review.[1] In the words of D. Welsh, the biographer of Thomas Brown, 'There was no subject in literature and philosophy that did not engage their (the members of the Academy of Physics, Brown, Leyden, Horner and Erskine in particular) attention. It was often morning before they departed.'[2] In 1808 Francis Horner recalled 'those evenings of discussion and disputation when universal empire was in our hands over all things human and divine.'[3] Years later Erskine fondly remembered 'so many pleasant and improving hours' spent in the Academy of Physics.[4] Even after Erskine had left Edinburgh at the end of 1799, his friends were keen to involve him in their literary projects.[5] Indeed he kept up correspondence with some of them. Francis Horner probably supplied Erskine details of Dugald Stewart's lectures on political economy.[6]

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1 Clive, John, Scotch Reviewers: The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1815, London 1957, p. 26, Appendix: 'The Founding of the Edinburgh Review', pp. 186-197.

2 Life of Dr. Brown, quoted in John Reith's Life of Dr. John Leyden, p. 153.

3 Quoted, ibid, p. 155

4 Erskine's letter of 5th March, 1850, to James Reddie, Reddie Letters, MS. 3704, f.168. National Library of Scotland.

5 See, for instance, Horner's letter of 23rd Jan., 1800 to Erskine, Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner, M.P. (ed. L. Horner), 1853, Vol. I., p.100.

6 Loc. cit.

Many of Erskine's early, and indeed, later literary associates bear testimony on the vast learning and understanding for which they held him in great regard. In November 1803 in a letter to a friend Francis Horner refers to 'the great value of his (Erskine's) acquisition' and 'the fineness of his understanding and the rarity of his acquisition'.[1] These acquirements had placed Erskine 'very high in the esteem of a great many friends'.[2] The Poet Campbell, one of Erskine's literary associates in Edinburgh in 1790s, who was supposedly very sparing with his praises found Erskine 'the most unexceptional (sic) fellow of my acquaintance.'[3] Mackintosh, who himself was renowned in Whig social circles for his 'encyclopaedic mind',[4] was impressed by Erskine's 'vast and accurate learning' and 'his taste for philosophical studies.'[5]

Erskine studied literature, history, philosophy, religions, poetry and political philosophy as entries of works read by him in his diary and his correspondence with his friends show. For him learning had a practical purpose.

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[1]Francis Horner to James Reddie - James Reddie Letters, MS. 3704 f.15 (reverse) National Library of Scotland.

[2]Francis Horner's letter of 18th April 1805 to Mackintosh, Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner, 1853, Vol. I, p. 324.

[3]Beattie, William (Ed.) Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, London 1849, Vol. I, p. 243.

[4]Brailsford, H.N. Shelley, Godwin and their circle, London 1914, p.157.

[5]Memoirs of Mackintosh, I, p.331, DNB,Supplement II, 1901,p.190.

He was much vexed by the condition of the toiling masses, unequal distribution of wealth and the ignorance of the masses as a result of the monopoly of higher classes in education.[1] He hoped that studies and learning may be able to 'extricate some flashes of truth from the masses of error with which we are surrounded', so that 'the growth and the progress of human improvement' could be facilitated.[2] The 'great use of research and knowledge' was to benefit society by forming 'enlarged and philosophical' views after carefully observing causal connection of social phenomena.[3] He was an ardent believer in the idea of progress. In 1795 he thus expressed his feelings to a friend: 'the grand object of the progression of the human race, which, if it be a dream, is surely the most glorious dream which ever glanced before the mind of mortals'.[4] Erskine had imbibed the ideas of Fenelon, Shaftesbury, David Hume, Adam Smith, Adam Fergusson, John Millar and Dugald Stewart. He most certainly had read Turgot and was enchanted by Godwin's Enquiry

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[1]Erskine's letter of c.1796 to Lundie. Lundie Letters, MS. 9847 ff. 190-94 (reverse). See also Erskine's letter to James Reddie, James Reddie Letters, MS. 3704, f.163. National Library of Scotland.

[2]Erskine's letter of c. 1796 to Lundie - Lundie Letters, MS. 9847, f. 192 (reverse) National Library of Scotland.

[3]Erskine's letter of October 27, 1848 to James Reddie, James Reddie Letters, MS. 3704, f. 163. National Library of Scotland.

[4]Lundie MS., 9847, f. 151. National Library of Scotland.

Concerning Political Justice,[1] in 1795-96. It may be safely assumed that he had studied the works of Voltaire and Montesquieu and the physiocrats.

Erskine's vast learning, intellectual curiosity and his avid desire to contribute to the progress of man, naturally inclined him to attempt to understand and comprehend the alien society in which he found himself in India. It is significant that two of his earliest interests were the history of Gujrat and of the Parsees. In Nov. 1804 he had a conference with Parsees, the leading commercial community of Bombay with which the East India Company came in direct contact.[2] By February 1805 he was collecting information about the history of Gujrat.[3] Having taken up legal profession as his career, he had attempted 'to examine the nature of the pursuits of the attorney.'[4] Later in life when he lived

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[1] In C.1796 he regarded Godwin's 'Inquiry' as 'the first political or philosophical work of the present time', Erskine to Lundie, Lundie MSS. 9847, f.193 National LIbrary of Scotland.

[2] vide Leyden's letter of November 27, 1804 to Erskine, Add. MSS. 26, 561, f. 55, B.M.

[3] vide David Price's letter of 6th February 1805 to Erskine, Oriental History and Antiquities (Erskine Papers), MSS. Eur. C.10, pp. 557-9. IOL.

[4] Erskine's letter of c.1796 to Lundi - MS. 9847 f.190. National Library of Scotland.

in France and Germany, he studied history and literature and took keen interest in political and social developments of these countries.[1]

Indeed, for Erskine a thorough local knowledge was essential for forming correct views on the history and manners of any people. Hence, his interest in the history of Gujrat and Parsees. Years later for him it was still the 'correct local knowledge that is extremely wanted both in England and India to give an idea of the real state of society and knowledge in India, besides extending the materials for correct service.'[2] Similar considerations had induced Mackintosh to urge upon the Government of Bombay the necessity of undertaking a statistical survey of Bombay island.

Erskine's early literary pursuits in India may be seen as an aspect of his close association with Mackintosh, whose ideas he shared on most subjects.[3] A philosopher and political economist, Mackintosh encouraged all branches of Indian studies during his stay in India.[4] He regarded a knowledge of the past

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[1] See entries in his diary for the years he was in these countries.

[2] Erskine's letter of 2nd August 1820 to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Papers, MSS. Eur. F.88. Box 7E. No.6. Erskine's letter is not dated, but the date is given in the table of contents.

[3] It is interesting to note that Mackintosh had been an ardent admirer - indeed a friend - of Godwin in 1790s. Also see Erskine's comments on Mackintosh's words, Erskine's Diary, ff. 26,27.

[4] See Mackintosh's discourse at the founding of the Literary Society of Bombay, Transactions, Vol. I (1819), pp. xi-xxiv.

and present conditions of the inhabitants of India as imperative for governing the country on a sound basis.[1] Even before leaving England he had planned to found a literary society in Bombay, an object accomplished in November, 1804. He urged the need of collecting detailed information, the corner stone of political economy. As a philosopher he took very comprehensive view of the studies which could lead to the formulation of general principles. He encouraged the study of sciences, literature, fine arts, history, geography, medicine and many other branches of knowledge.[2]

In his early years of sojourn in India Erskine was closely associated with Mackintosh's literary activities. His active participation in the Literary Society of Bombay and in the preparation of a 'Comparative Vocabulary of Indian Languages' has already been noticed. However, Erskine's first writings in India - contributions to the Literary Society of Bombay - were quite different from the studies he had pursued immediately on his arrival in India and were independent of Mackintosh's activities. These writings related to neither local history, nor to languages, but to antiquities.

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[1] Ibid, pp. xi-xii, xv.

[2] Ibid, pp. xi-xii. In 1806 Mackintosh suggested to the Asiatic Society of Bengal that Sanskrit works should be translated into English - Ibid, p.vi.

Erskine's first article was 'Observations on two sepulchral Urns found at Bushire in Persia.'[1] Six months later in November 1813, he presented a paper on the Cave-temple at Elephanta.[2] Erskine's first paper had been prompted by the receipt of two sepulchral urns from Persia. Mr. Bruce, the British Resident in the Persian Gulf sent the urns to Erskine 'knowing your interest in antiquities.' Similar considerations had induced Elphinstone to send him copies of inscriptions on the caves at Carlee.[3] The proximity of Elephanta to Bombay had naturally aroused Erskine's curiosity in the subject. In 1821 Erskine presented his fifth and last paper to the society - 'Observations on the Remains of the Bouddhists in India.'[4] This paper was an outcome of his visit to various old temples in the Deccan. Besides his own researches Erskine was eager to promote the study of Indian antiquities. He actively participated in the collection for the Literary Society of Bombay, of inscription and other remains in south India which he regarded as 'the only real remains of Hindu History'.[5] He intended to send copies of several inscriptions to principal

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[1] Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, Vol. I, 191-97.

[2] 'Account of the Cave-Temple of Elephanta, with a plan and Drawings of the Principal figures', ibid, pp.198-251.

[3] Colebrooke, op. cit., I, p.259.

[4] Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, Vol.III,pp. 494-537.

[5] Erskine to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Papers, Box 7E, Packet 6, dated January 20, 1819.

universities and Orientalists in Europe so that they could be deciphered.[1]

Erskine's interest in antiquities extended beyond India and Persia to Egypt and Babylon. For this he not only read works on the subject, but also maintained correspondence with some of those carrying out researches there.[2] The study of antiquities and classics during his early life had possibly aroused Erskine's interest in the archaeological remains of the East. Moreover, archaeological discoveries in Egypt and the foundation of the French Institute in Cairo had stimulated general interest in the subject in Europe.[3] In India itself British scholars had been taking considerable interest in the material remains of the past. William Chambers and more notably Wilkins had described some architectural remains and had translated some inscriptions in the Asiatick Researches.[4] Sir William Jones had also been aware of the importance of archaeological studies for ancient Indian history.[5]

Erskine's study of antiquities was, indeed, a facet of his

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[1] Erskine to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, Box 7/, Packet 6, dated January 20, 1819.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] See Daniel Glyn, The Origins and Growth of Archaeology, 1967, pp. 55-56; Thompson, J.W. A History of Historical Writing, New York 1942, Vol. II, p.515.

[4] Imam, Abu, Sir Alexander Cunningham and the Beginnings of Indian Archaeology, Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1966, p.15.

[5] Ibid, p.14.

interest in ancient history as was his desire for 'a radical examination of languages' which could further illustrate prehistoric times.[1] In 1809, four years before he wrote his first two articles on the subject, Erskine was reading materials for ancient Persian history.[2] Later in life he was exuberant that 'the old world is becoming much older in our chronology than it was ever before and on a pretty sure basis'.[3] Indeed, archaeological discoveries in Egypt had kindled general enthusiasm for the study of ancient civilizations which eventually led to the 'recovery' of the ancient orient.

Erskine's enthusiasm for the study of civilisations extended to the study of religions and mythologies in general. In India he studied Brahmanism and Buddhism. By 1813 he was conversant with Hindu mythology, as his paper on the cave temple of Elephanta shows. His 'Observations on the Remains of Bouddhists in India' indicates familiarity with the existing knowledge and concern to arouse more interest in the subject by raising pertinent questions. He wanted scholars to study interactions between Hinduism and Buddhism. He pointed to the adoption in Hindu mythology of Buddha as an avtar of Vishuu, study of which subject, Erskine emphasized,

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[1] Erskine to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, MSS. Eur. F.88, Box 3G, Packet 49, letter dated 15th June 1837.

[2] Erskine's Diary, f.5.

[3] Erskine to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, Box No. 5A, Packet 10, dated 17th February 1852.

'would form a valuable contribution to the history of the Brahmanical and Bouddhist religions'.[1] He himself prepared to elucidate this phenomenon further by translating several relevant passages from the Puranas and various other sources.[2]

Erskine's urge to study Indian religions derived partly from his concern for the progress of India. Both Hume and Turgot had assigned considerable importance to religious institutions in determining social patterns.[3] In Turgot's view religious conceptions at any time indicated how far human mind had advanced.[4] Erskine discovered that 'Religion and customs supposed to be connected with religion, are the great obstacles to the improvement of the Orientals, whether Mussulmans or Hindus.[5]

But for all Erskine's interest in antiquities and religions, his principal published works were devoted neither to ancient Indian history nor to Indian religions, but to the history of the 'House of Taimur'. Indeed, in 1809,

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[1] 'Observations on the Remains of the Bouddhists in India', Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, III, p.532.

[2] See Add MS., 26603 (B.M.) which contains extracts from Ganesh and Shiv Puranas on Buddhist religion along with a list of various names and epithets of Buddha.

[3] Becker, H. and Barnes, H.E. Social Thought from lore to Science, 1961 (3rd ed.), Vol. I, pp. 411-12.

[4] Becker, H. and Barnes, H.E. opcit., pp. 471-75; Bury, J.B. The Idea of Progress, London 1920, p.157.

[5] Erskine, 'On the sacred Books and Religion of the Paris', Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, Vol. II, 1820, p.336.

simultaneously with all his other literary preoccupations he was actively planning to write a history of Aurangzib.[1] His attempts in 1810-11 to improve his knowledge of Persian were an aspect of his work for his projected history of Aurangzib; he required sufficient knowledge of the language to read Persian sources in the original.[2] Occasionally he engaged munshis to help him.[3] An account of Aurangzib's Mughal predecessors was to form a befitting introduction to Erskine's history. At first he collected some materials on Babur and Humayun, but later he thought of beginning with Shah Jahan.[4] But the intended history of Aurangzib was set aside in favour of the translation of Babur's memoirs and never taken up again.

During the years 1812-16 Erskine completed the translation of Babur's Memoirs enriching it with many scholarly notes and an introduction. But though completed in 1816 the Memoirs could not be published until 1826.[5] The translation of the Memoirs which appeared under the joint names of John Leyden and William Erskine was primarily the work of Erskine. A full

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[1] Erskine's Diary, ff. 1-2.
[2] Ibid, ff. 4,5.
[3] Ibid, f. 5.
[4] Ibid, ff. 5,6.
[5] It seems that the translation sent by Erskine to England was lost and not recovered for a few years.

idea of Erskine's labours and contributions may be obtained from a history of the translation of the Memoirs. Leyden had begun by himself the translation from the original Turki of the Memoirs.[1] His progress with the work was interrupted by his appointment to Java where he died prematurely in August 1811.[2] Erskine was enthusiastic to complete his friend's unfinished work. Consequently, he wrote to James Hare of Calcutta, in whose possession Leyden's papers were, for Leyden's translation of the Memoirs.[3] But before Erskine's letter reached Calcutta Leyden's manuscripts and papers had already been despatched to Britain.[4] It was not, therefore, till the end of 1813 that Erskine received a copy of Leyden's translation of Babur's Memoirs.[5] It should however be emphasized that before Erskine received Leyden's papers, he had himself already completed his own translation of the Memoirs from the Persian version in his possession.[6] The arrival of Leyden's papers put Erskine, as he explains, in 'rather an awkward dilemma'.[7] He found that the two translations differed in many important respects. As

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[1] Memoirs (King's ed. of 1921), Preface, p.xxxiv.
[2] Ibid, pp. xxxiv-v.
[3] Ibid, p. xxxv.
[4] Loc. cit.
[5] Loc. cit.
[6] Loc. cit.
[7] Loc. cit.

Leyden's translation was from the original Turki, Erskine 'resolved to adopt it as far as it went,[1] changing only such expressions in it as seemed to be inconsistent with the context, or with other parts of the Memoirs.'[2] This he had accomplished when Elphinstone sent him a copy of the Memoirs in the original Turki. This compelled Erskine 'though heartily sick of the task', not merely to compare Leyden's translation with the original but also to compare and collate the Turki and Persian versions.[3] Thus, Erskine not only translated half of the Memoirs, but also devoted minute attention to Leyden's portion of the work. His efforts resulted in substantial changes in Leyden's translation. Elphinstone, who had not anticipated this, admitted to Erskine that 'I was wrong in what I said at first, for it may be doubted whether this is not rather a new translation than Leyden's improved.'[4] Besides completing, scrutinizing and changing Leyden's translation, Erskine also wrote the long Introduction and supplied the notes for the Memoirs.

After completing the Memoirs in 1816 Erskine did not resume

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[1]Leyden's translation ends at p.195 of the Memoirs.
[2]Memoirs (King's ed. of 1921), Preface, p.xxxv.
[3]Ibid, p. xxxvi.
[4]Colebrooke, op. cit., I, p.267.

his earlier plan of writing a history of Aurangzib. During the remaining six years of his stay in India he wrote two articles on the Parsees[1] and one on Buddhism.[2] Also he spent time preparing the Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay for publication. Since his appointment in 1819 as a member of the Committee for drafting regulations for the Bombay Presidency he mostly read on subjects pertaining to government and legislation. He studied Bentham in detail.[3] Later, due to circumstances connected with his dismissal from his post and his family and financial problems his studies on Indo-Muslim history remained in abeyance for nearly ten years after his return to Britain in 1823.

Erskine's involvement with the study of Indo-Muslim history needs a full explanation. After all his other interests, namely, antiquities, ancient history, religions, and the study of languages and the fact that he was placed in Bombay, do not suggest that Muslim Indian history was Erskine's obvious choice of field. Circumstancial evidence suggests that William Erskine came to Muslim Indian history through a desire to understand and study the Marathas who dominated the

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[1] These were 'On the Sacred Books and Religion of the Parsees' and 'On the Dabistan and Destir - their authenticity'. Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, Vol. II, pp. 295-341, 342-74.

[2] 'Observations on the Remains of the Bouddhists', ibid, Vol. III, pp. 494-537.

[3] Erskine's Diary, ff 9-10.

political scene in the Deccan in which the Bombay government was directly involved at the time of Erskine's going to India. The British had acquired substantial advantages from the Maratha war of 1802-03 after which their influence and power at the court of the Peshwa in Poona steadily mounted. The British had, thus, vested interest in understanding the history of the Marathas. Moreover, the publication of documents relating to the war of 1802-03 had excited curiosity amongst intellectuals in Britain about the Maratha political institutions. In April 1805, only a few months after Mackintosh' arrival in India, Francis Horner, an intimate friend both of Erskine and Mackintosh, was urging Mackintosh to set Erskine and others to collect materials on the history of the Marathas, 'a people whose political situation is so interesting, both in its singularities, and its analogies to what has been elsewhere.'[1]

Whether or not it was in response to Horner's wishes, the fact is that Erskine did collect varied materials on the Marathas. These materials cover two centuries of Maratha history. The nature of the materials collected by Erskine suggests that he had intended to trace the history of the rise of the Maratha power and of their revenue resources. Maratha history inevitably led Erskine to Aurangzib. It is significant that one volume of Erskine's papers on Aurangzib is almost

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[1] Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner, 1853,I, p.319

exclusively concerned with the Marathas.[1] Amongst other materials, this volume contains copies of letters descriptive of Shivaji's relations with Aurangzib, the encounters of Shivaji's successors with Aurangzib and details about the Peshwas. It was no mere coincidence that Erskine's first interest in Indo-Muslim rulers centred on Aurangzib.

Erskine's interest in Muslim studies may be regarded also as a facet of his close association with Leyden whose literary activities embraced a very wide range of subjects. Amongst Leyden's multifarious literary interests was his desire to study the introduction of Islam into parts of India.[2] Also he was an enthusiastic collector of manuscripts on all subjects including Muslim Indian history. That Leyden partly aroused Erskine's interest in Indo-Muslim history is suggested by the fact it was after Erskine's return from Bengal where he met Leyden and discussed literary plans, that he formulated serious plans of writing the history of Aurangzib.

Erskine's shift of attention from Aurangzib to Babur was also influenced by Leyden who had left his papers on Babur to Erskine.[3] Erskine felt a 'warm interest' in completing Leyden's unfinished translation of Babur's Memoirs so that 'nothing

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[1] Add. MS. 26,606. British Museum.

[2] See Add. MS. 26,585 in the British Museum. Part of the manuscript is devoted to the introduction of Islam in Malabar.

[3] Erskine was one of the literary executors of Leyden's will.

which could add to his reputation (Leyden's) should be lost.'[1] However, as already mentioned, Erskine undertook afresh a translation of the Memoirs. This was completely unrelated to any completion of Leyden's work. As he mentions in the Preface to the Memoirs, it was Malcolm and Elphinstone who induced Erskine to undertake the translation.[2] Elphinstone considered it a 'thousand pities' that Babur's Memoirs, a work replete with valuable information, was not yet translated.[3] Both Malcolm and Elphinstone had been to the countries described by Babur and both were highly regarded in their knowledge of central Asia. Consequently, their advice that Babur's Memoirs deserved to be translated had a 'natural weight' with Erskine.[4]

Though the actual translation of Babur's Memoirs by Erskine owes a good deal to the influence of Elphinstone and Malcolm, Erskine's interest in Babur dates from before he undertook the translation in 1811. Before he had even met Elphinstone Erskine had translated a part of the Memoirs. His concern with Babur is attributable further to his studies for the 'Comparative Vocabulary' and his projected history of Aurangzib. For the 'Comparative Vocabulary' he was

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[1] Memoirs (King's ed. of 1921), Preface, p.xxxv.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Colebrooke, op. cit., I, p.260.
[4] Memoirs (King's ed) p. xxxv.

collecting materials from the classical and current Persian language.[1] For his history of Aurangzib he had extracted materials for Babur from Khwafi Khan.

Furthermore, Erskine was an avid collector of manuscripts. He along with Mackintosh and others was eager to find native sources for a history of India. In 1809 we find Henry Russell, British Resident at Haidrabad, sending Erskine Persian manuscripts.[2] Again in 1811 Henry Russell, sent him several Persian manuscripts.[3] In 1812 Erskine's Persian collection included works not only on India but several other eastern countries.[4] The same year he was ready to 'give the highest value' for Leyden's Persian manuscripts on Indian history.[5] Discovery and possession of several unknown or vaguely known works suggested to Erskine the desirability of writing a history of Muslim rule in India.[6]

Erskine's literary ambitions also influenced his decision to translate the Memoirs instead of continuing with the history of Aurangzib. His duties as a police magistrate left

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[1] Add.MS. 26, 605. The Persian vocabulary is in Erskine's own hand. ff. 89.

[2] Adv. MSS. 26.1.6. Henry Russell's letters to Erskine. National Library of Scotland.

[3] List of Oriental MSS. 1854-1866, B.M. This contains a list of historical Persian manuscripts sent by Russell to Erskine in 1811 - catalogue p. 777. See also, Loc. cit.

[4] List of Oriental MSS., B.M. Erskine's manuscripts are listed there.

[5] Erskine's letter of January 16, 1812 to Heber, Leyden's Letters, MS 939, f.77, National Library of Scotland.

[6] Erskine to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur.F.88 Box 3H, Packet 53, dated November 11, 1834.

him very little leisure for writing at a time when he was very eager to produce some substantial literary work. Leyden's death in 1811 had brought Erskine a sudden realization of his own advancing age. It reminded him 'if I am really to do anything I have not time to lose'.[1] With limited time at his disposal, the translation of Babur's Memoirs was a more feasible proposition and more likely to win him literary repute. Elphinstone indeed had already proposed to Erskine the translation of Babur's Memoirs on the assumptions that 'you have not time for any such undertaking as the history you have planned' and that 'it would just answer to fill up your time till you have leisure for greater designs.'[2]

However, a worldly determination to place the winning of public literary recognition above all else is conspicuously absent from Erskine's later Indo-Muslim studies. Academic considerations induced him to resume and continue Muslim Indian history in the eighteen-thirties and forties. He regarded most British studies on Muslim Indian history as very inadequate. Consequently he needed himself to write a history of Muslim rule in India. He was very conscious of the fact that his history 'will require much time, patience and study - better eyes and perhaps better knowledge of Oriental languages than I possess'.[3] In the eighteen-thirties circumstances were

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f. 5 (reverse)

[2] Colebrook, op. cit. I, p. 260.

[3] Erskine's Diary, f. 28 (reverse)

unfavourable to Erskine - he was nearing sixty, his memory was failing him, the difficulty of reading manuscripts was serious, and his family cares demanded great attention. Undaunted by these difficulties, and half aware that he would not be able through advancing years to complete the work, Erskine undertook 'the daring project' of writing a history of India from Babur to Aurangzib based on available Persian sources. That Erskine was not impelled by any worldly ambition is evident also from the fact that he never devoted a single-minded attention to the project, imperative if he had wished to gain literary recognition by a successful completion of the work during his life-time. Erskine's chief objective was to further existing knowledge - his deviations from work on the House of Taimur are strongly indicative of it. In 1842 when he was thinking of finishing Babur and Humayun for publication, he could still find time for systematizing his notes on Stewart's translation of Jauhar's Humayun.[1] Similarly in 1845 after the publisher Murray had refused to publish Erskine's volume on Babur, Erskine's concern was not to make changes in his history of Babur so as to make it acceptable for publication, but to arrange his other papers so that they might be of use to succeeding historians.[2] Working against odds and pressed for

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[1] The Tezkereh Al Vakiat, Add. MS. 26,608,f.1 (B.M.)

[2] Erskine's Diary, f. 48

time, Erskine never gave up his readings on poetry, literature, philosophy, politics and history in general as is apparent from his diary. A ruthless drive towards one goal, albeit an academic or scholarly goal, was never one of Erskine's personal characteristics.

It seems that Erskine's desire to go deep into Mughal history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was influenced by A.H.L. Heeren's works which he was reading just a year before he resumed his 'House of Taimur.'[1] Heeren (1760-1842), a professor of history at the University of Gottingen had suggested that the close of the fifteenth century may be regarded as marking the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times in European history.[2] This was the time when Europe set on active commercial relationships with East and West. The turn of the century also witnessed the beginnings of the formation of modern states in Europe, which for Heeren was one of the great characteristics of European history between 1492 and 1789[3]. Heeren, whom Erskine held in high esteem[4], probably stimulated Erskine to examine

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f.24.

[2] Butterfield, H. Man on His Past, Cambridge, 1955, p.130. See also Thomspon, History of Historical Writing, II, pp. 127-30.

[3] Butterfield, Man on his Past, p. 110; Thompson History of Historical Writing, pp. 127-30.

[4] Erskine found him 'a very critical and trustworthy' writer - Erskine's Diary, f. 24.

where there were analogies between the formation of certain kingdoms in Asia and the emergence of modern states in Europe.[1]

Erskine viewed a thorough study of the Mughals as essential for understanding modern India. To use his own words 'a considerable acquaintance with it (Mughal period) is perhaps necessary to such as would thoroughly understand the present state of India'[2]; he loved contemporary history[3]. Hume and Turgot's idea of orderly development and continuity in social processes undoubtedly informed Erskine's view that the Mughal period formed 'a natural foundation for the modern history of India'.[4] And yet the history of this period had never been written in detail in any European language.[5]

Most histories of early Mughal rule had been based on Firishta alone, although other abundant materials existed for such a study. Mill's History of India, in Erskine's opinion, was 'more a critical essay on the history of India rather than a history'.[6]

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[1] House of Taimur, I, Preliminary Remarks, pp 2-6.

[2] ibid, p. 2.

[3] Erskine's review article on Tod's Annals of Rajasthan (Vol. II) in The Edinburgh Review, Vol. 56 (1832-33), p.97. Authorship vide Erskine's letters of May 25th and 30th, 1832 to M. Napier, Macvey Napier Papers, Add. MS. 34615, ff.335B.M.

[4] House of Taimur, I, Preface, p.x.

[5] Ibid, p.2.

[6] Erskine's letter of November 3, 1834, to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, (IOL) Box 3F, Packet 39.

Moreover, Mill's history though quite detailed in later portion, was deficient on the history of Muslim rule in India. His narrative in these parts was 'brief, and hurried over with rapidity.'[1] Even in later portions Mill's history was lacking: it had the disadvantage of being devoted to a particular system.[2] Mill, in Erskine's opinion was 'a thorough-going theorist, who cannot be checked in hastening to his conclusions. This makes his opinions on manners of very little weight and mars the labour and thought which he has bestowed in coming to them.'[3] The materials for a history of modern India were easily accessible in European languages whereas the sources for Mughal Indian history were chiefly in the languages of the East and were not yet fully known. Erskine possessed the requisite knowledge of Persian and a considerable knowledge of sources to enable him to fill the lacunea in British historical knowledge of India. Somewhat similar considerations also induced Elphinstone to undertake a history of India about the same time as Erskine began seriously on the 'House of Taimur'.

Erskine continued his work despite his knowledge that Elphinstone had begun a large-scale study which would treat part of the same field. Elphinstone's history could not have

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[1] House of Taimur, I, Preface, p.viii.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Erskine's letter of 20th Sept., 1837 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, (IOL), MSS. Eur. F.88, Box 3.

fulfilled the object Erskine had in mind. Moreover, Erskine and Elphinstone were in close literary contact and, therefore, aware of each other's work. Erskine was right in thinking that the nature and scope of their histories would not overlap. He was concentrating on a very small period of Indian history in contradistinction to Elphinstone's aim to write a general history of India. Erskine believed that in comparison to his 'House of Taimur' Elphinstone's general history would only give a rapid view of the Mughals. Hence, Elphinstone would 'seize on only a few of the characteristic features and events of those times, the spirit of their government, the chief wars, the enlargement or decrease of the empire, the state of morals and learning'.[1] On the contrary, he himself proposed to dwell on the incidents of the reigns of the Mughal emperors on the basis of a minute examination of several Persian sources. In November 1834 when both Erskine and Elphinstone were engaged on their respective histories, Erskine wrote to Elphinstone: 'Although you would of course hunt for materials of every class for your subject, I do not suppose you would have either time to waste or inclination to waste, on the more minute researches which I had chalked out for myself. I consider the history of India

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[1]Erskine's letter of November 11, 1834, to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 3H, Packet 53.

as quite different thing from my plan of a merely civil or military history of a portion of its Dynasties.'[1] Furthermore, Erskine must have known that Elphinstone's knowledge of Persian was very limited.[2] Hence, he was aware that Elphinstone's history of Mughals could not be based on any critical examination of sources which were mostly in Persian. Erskine, therefore, had a purpose to fulfil - 'to furnish from a comparison of as many of the original historians of India as were accessible to the author, such a narrative of public events .. as might be at once more minute and more authentic than . . . has yet appeared in any European language.'[3]

Erskine's aim to write a detailed narrative history of Mughal rule in India was not much in consonance with the Rationalist tradition, but was nevertheless in no way wholly out of line with it. He was in no wise averse to 'philos-

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[1] Loc. cit.

[2] In 1840 Elphinstone wrote to Erskine ,' If I could read Persian books as you can, I should stop the press, and begin a new houe of Taimur tomorrow.' Again in 1847 he wrote to Erskine 'I cannot read even the red letter headings of chapters (in Persian)which give some notion of what a book is about'. Colebrooke, op. cit. II, pp. 351-52, 372. In view of the intimacy that existed between Erskine and Elphinstone, it may be assumed that Erskine had known the extent of Elphinstone's knowledge of Persian even before 1840.

[3] House of Taimur, I, Preface, p. ix.

ophical' history. Indeed he greatly appreciated 'the high and useful ground of a philosophical and political sketch' which in his view was the purpose of Elphinstone's history.[1] But he was hostile to generalisations and theorizing based on scanty facts and observations.[2] As early as 1796 he had hesitated before making hasty generalisations.[3] In this he was presumably influenced by Robertson and A.F. Tytler. Robertson had paid much attention to factual details in his works, especially in his History of Scotland. A.F. Tytler who was the Professor of History in the University of Edinburgh when Erskine was a student there, was warned against 'The prevailing propensity with modern philosophers to reduce everything to general principles', and against the construction of historical systems on insufficient knowledge of facts[4]. Erskine's hesitancy to generalize and philosophize was undoubtedly strengthened by the ideas of Romantic historians some of whom he read, for example, Schiller, Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël, Schlegel, while engaged on his magnum opus.[5] Erskine set himself to furnish detailed factual

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[1] Erskine's letter of 9th March 1840 to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 4A, Packet 5.

[2] Ibid, letter of 20th September 1837.

[3] Erskine's letter of 25th October 1796 to Lundie - Lundi MSS, No. 9847, f. 184 National Library of Scotland.

[4] Elements of General History, 1801, I, pp. 43-4.

[5] See Erskine's Diary, ff. 17,23,25,26,31,32,34.

history, but undoubtedly with a view to providing information for philosophical historians who could then 'walk boldly over the ground that is excavated below by the obscure labour of us miners and moles'.[1]

Indeed, most of Erskine's time for the House of Taimur was taken up by the spade work; he had to read abstract, and translate Persian manuscripts before he could actually write his history. He wrote to Elphinstone 'My hours are .. principally given not to writing but repenning Indian writers.'[2] Moreover reading shikstah - mechanical work for which he could have received help easily in India - gave him much trouble.[3] The existence of a few translated works did not make his work any the easier. Most of these translations were imperfect and incomplete. This often compelled Erskine to compare translations with their originals. Thus, for instance, he spent several months in comparing, collating and correcting Stewart's translation of Jauhar's Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat which he needed for Humayun's reign.[4] Similar labours had to be bestowed on Price's translation of Jahangir 's memoirs.[5] The restricted knowledge about the

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[1]Erskine to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 88, letter of 20th September 1837.

[2]Erskine's letter of 28th June 1846 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, Box 4D, Packet 20.

[3]Colebrooke, op. cit. II, p. 343

[4]Erskine's Diary, ff. 36.

[5]Ibid, ff. 41-42.

Persian sources posed further problems for Erskine, whose researches continually yielded new source material. This often forced him to make changes in his work. In 1836 he thus explained his dilemma to Elphinstone: 'The Persian works being referred not like the Greek or Roman writers, definite in number and known, but unlimited and many of them unknown, any conclusion from such authorities may be destroyed by a single sentence of a contemporary or better-informed writer, not yet known, but who may hereafter be brought forward.'[1] Thus, for instance, he had to revise his volume on Babur after discovering the Tarikh-i Rashidi by Mirza Haider. There was yet another difficulty which often interrupted the progress of the House of Taimur ; being away from large libraries often he could not get the relevant works. His studies on Akbar were broken because of his inability to procure a part of the Akbarnamah.[2]

Despite numerous interruptions and against odds Erskine persevered in his study of the House of Taimur. He 'drugdged on . . . not in the hopes of doing anything that may please either myself or others' but because the work had been begun.[3]

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[1]Letter of July 22, Elphinstone Papers, MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 3G, Packet 49.

[2]Erskine's letter of January 28, 1845 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 4C, Packet 18.

[3]Erskine's letter of July 22, 1836 to Elphinstone, ibid, Box 3G, Packet 49.

Also, Elphinstone's constant encouragement kept him going with his Indian history.[1] He hoped 'to soothe the way for others' 'by removing some difficulties in one walk of history.'[2] He was sanguine that 'my clearing the road may be useful to others and help to show what to follow and what to shun; if indeed, my collections see the light.'[3]

The House of Taimur appeared in two volumes, each consisting of nearly 550 pages and devoted respectively to Babur and Humayun. Volume one comprises three 'Books' besides 'Preliminary Remarks', Introduction and appendices. The 'Preliminary Remarks' contain general observations on Indian history while in the Introduction of seventy pages Erskine gives an account of the Tartars and of the state of Transoxania at the time of Babur's accession. The first two Books deal with the history of Babur prior to his conquest of India. It is the third Book, amounting to a little less than one-third of the entire volume, that is devoted to Babur's conquest of India and his subsequent rule there. The five short appendices at the end are devoted to the

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[1]This is to be found in their correspondence.

[2]Erskine's letter of 18 November 1845 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL), MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 4D, Packet 19.

[3]Erskine's letter July 22, 1836 to Elphinstone, ibid., Box 3G, Packet No. 49.

Tartar tribes, Khans of Mughalistan and the amirs of Kashgar, Chaghtai Khans of Mawerannaher, the size of Babur's revenues and his money of account.

Of the second volume nearly two-thirds deals with Humayun. Of the remaining one-third major portion is occupied by Shir Shah and his successors. Some attention is paid to the kingdoms of Gujrat and Malwa before Humayun's conquest of those kingdoms. But of the two-thirds devoted to Humayun, three-fifths deal with Humayun's expulsion from India and his activities outside India till return. The House of Taimur concludes with some observations on government, society in Kabul and adjoining countries during the reigns of Babur and Humayun.

The House of Taimur is based primarily on Persian sources from the use of which it derives its chief value. Besides Babur-nama, Erskine's main sources are Mirza Haider's Tarikh-i-Rashidi, Jauhar's Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat, Abul Fazl's Akbarnamah, Badauni's Muntakhab-ul-Tawarikh or Tarikh-i-Badauni, Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Tarikh-i-Firishtah, Khwafi Khan and the Tarikh-i-Sind. Besides he has used Khwand Mir's Rauzat-al-Safa, Habib-al-Siyar, and Khulasat al-Akhbar, Tarikh-i-Alam Arai Abbasi, the Nisabnama-i-Afghanan and Mirat-i Ahmadi. For a general geographical account, he has relied on travel literature too. Though the House of Taimur is based chiefly on Persian sources, it was Erskine's intention to draw equally from

travel literature wherever it existed. For Aurangzib's reign he regarded Fryer's travels very valuable.[1]

The fact that the major portion of the House of Taimur is devoted to the activities of Babur and Humayun outside India may suggest that India east of the Indus was not the centre of Erskine's studies. For a correct understanding of this aspect of his work it must be borne in mind that the House of Taimur was intended to form a part of the larger work on the Mughal rulers from Babur to Aurangzib. Erskine's having translated the Memoirs had presumably predisposed him towards the study of Central Asia, but he had written the first two volumes with an eye on the eventual establishment of Mughal rule in India. He undoubtedly felt that the establishment of Mughal rule in India could not be fully understood without a sound knowledge of Babur's activities in central Asia. And for a 'proper understanding' of Babur's earlier activities, a knowledge of the geography, history and contemporary situation in central Asia was 'indispensable.'[2] Thus what may seem unrelated to Indian history in the House of Taimur forms an integral part of it in its relation to Erskine's larger plans.

Erskine took a very large view of history. Like Hume,

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f.2.

[2] Erskine's letters of 18th August 1844 and 31st May 1845 to Elphinstone. Elphinstone Papers, MSS. Eur. F.88, Box 4C, Packet 17 and Box 4D and Packet 19.

whose 'easy philosophy' he admired, 'a systematic' and 'scientific' study of 'human mind and its natural progress' had a special fascination for Erskine.[1] But unlike Hume, he did not regard history as pre-eminently a record of intellectual and moral ideas. Erskine's 'Introduction' to the Memoirs, his 'Preliminary' and 'Supplementary' remarks in the House of Taimur as well as its introductory chapter, and more particularly his correspondence with Elphinstone show that he conceived history as a record of human activity in all its manifestations: manners, laws, religion, customs, technology, agriculture, commerce and various other social and political institutions. In Erskine's own words 'domestic manners, the habits of thinking, religious and philosophical opinions, laws, taxation and revenue, on which so much the happiness and misery of a people depend, are the real substance of history. Public events, the rise and fall of princes and of states, in war or by faction, though important in their way, are only the husks and shells to guard and preserve the others, the mere platform on which they are supported or exhibited.'[2] In his views on the scope of history, Erskine is

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[1] Erskine's letter of January 5, 1842 to James Reddie - James Reddie's Letters, MS. 3704, f.123, National Library of Scotland.

[2] Erskine's letter of November 18, 1845 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur. F88, Box 4D, Packet 19, see also letter of 15th June 1837 in Box 3G, Packet 49.

akin to Voltaire who demanded of the modern historian 'more attention to customs, laws, mores, commerce, finance, agriculture, population and topography.'[1]

Despite Erskine's enlarged views on the scope of history, the House of Taimur is devoted primarily to the military and political transactions during the reigns of Babur and Humayun. Only a very small portion of the work is devoted to non-military and social subjects. This discrepancy between his ideas and actual performance becomes intelligible when we view the House of Taimur in progression. In 1831 when Erskine resumed the Indo-Muslim history after an interval of fifteen years, his plan was to write two histories: one was to be a general history of the period of which he was writing a political history. Even the scope of the House of Taimur was not intended to be exclusively military and political transactions. During the course of his researches we find Erskine becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the House of Taimur , which was progressively assuming the form of a chronicle of military and political events. He often expressed his fears on this subject to his friends, particularly to Elphinstone. As early as June 1836 he realized that his work

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[1]Voltaire in his article on 'History' in Diderot's Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, tome XVII, quoted, Thompson, History of Historical Writing, II, p. 67.

was not 'sufficiently descriptive of Oriental manners.'[1] In December 1837 when he had finished 'after a sort' the reigns of Babur and Humayun he noted with despair, 'I am not pleased with what I have done in Indian history. My notes are defective in giving any idea of state of society, of religion, of learning, of manners, of politics, and in all the branches connected with political economy.'[2] In May 1847 having completed Babur, his main regret was 'the greatest poverty' of it was in 'what relates to the state of society.'[3]

The 'poverty' of 'Babur' was partly owing to the fact that Erskine had reserved most subjects dealing with society, religion, literature, government, etc. for the later portion of his history. When writing the history of Babur 'I looked forward to the future, I thought that many of these would belong more properly to the reign of Humayun and still more of Akbar, Baber's reign being entirely one of transition rather than of any settled government.'[4] 'Many of these reflections', he wrote to Elphinstone, 'would come with more weight and propriety in a succeeding reign.'[5] This was why Erskine

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f.33.

[2] ibid, f. 38 (reverse)

[3] Erskine's letter of May 3, 1847 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL), MSS. Eur. F. 88, Box 4D, Packet 24.

[4] Erskine's letter of January 21, 1845 to Elphinstone, ibid, Box 4C, Packet 18.

[5] Loc. cit.

devoted some attention to these subjects at the end of Humayun's reign. Akbar's reign which would have embraced the study of government, and presumably of religious and philosophical opinions of the times, remained unfinished.

Other factors were responsible for confining the scope of the House of Taimur to political history. First, sufficient materials were not available for a non-political history of the Mughal times. It was 'seldom that any satisfactory means' were available for ascertaining social history.[1] He wrote to Reddie that it was 'very difficult to collect materials which could 'give insight into the religious, moral and political state of the country'.[2] Ain-i-Akbari, however, was a 'remarkable exception'. Second, Erskine was diffident of his linguistic abilities to distinguish nuances in religious and philosophic subjects. In November 1845 he wrote to Elphinstone, 'I feel much difficulty from my imperfect knowledge of Persian and entire ignorance of Arabic, so that I am constantly in doubt as to the meaning of general, or abstract, or technical terms in their (of Muslims) philosphy, in their religious discussions, though on a thorough knowledge

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[1]Erskine's letter of 18th November 1845 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, Box 4D, Packet 19.

[2]Erskine's letter of 9th March 1847, James Reddie Letters, MS 3704, f. 151. National Library of Scotland.

of them so much depends. This of course takes away all confidence in attempting to touch on them'.[1]

Erskine's attitude towards translations of historical works follows from his conception of history. He was the first British historian to underline the value and necessity of 'close and literal' translation of oriental works; 'the style of a people' he remarked, 'exhibits in some degrees the dress of their mind, and often leads to more just conclusions regarding their habits of thinking, than can easily be attained in any other way.'[2]

In view of the fact that most existing translations were inadequate, Erskine was very critical of the existing standard of translations. He was indignant at the 'havoc' Stewart had wrought in his translation of Jauhar's Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat: 'names changed, passages omitted, clauses inserted .. and every kind of carelessness and infidelity as for mere mistaking the sense,that unfortunately is incidental to all translations.'[3] In the interest of scholarship Erskine wanted that Stewart 'ought to be exposed to the terror of careless and faceless translators and to the shame of

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[1] Elphinstone Papers (IOL), MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 4D, Packet 19.

[2] Memoirs, Preface, p. xi.

[3] Erskine to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL) MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 3G, Packet 49, 15th June 1837.

Or(iental) Transl(ation) Comm(ittee).[1]

In the use of historical sources Erskine reveals critical acumen remarkable for that period. In 1810s contemporaneously with and much before he read[2] Niebuhr, who is reputed for his critical assessment of historical sources, Erskine was using interpretative and internal criticism for evaluating historical sources. It was from internal evidence that he reached the conclusion that the Desatir was a fabrication. On the basis of internal evidence Erskine suggests that Desatir, the author of which work claims that it was composed in remote antiquity, could not have been written prior to 14th or 15th century; it 'having been devised and reduced into form between 200 and 300 years ago.'[3] He was indignant at William Jones's uncritical acceptance of the Dabistan: 'a more perverted judgment' on historical evidence could not be found in the history of literature.[4] He rightly contended that every history 'to deserve our credit, ought to bring with it the evidence that belongs to its class'.[5] He stressed the value of contemporary evidence; his attitude was 'to

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[1] Erskine's Diary, f.36.

[2] We find Erskine reading Niebuhr in 1837, ibid, f.37.

[3] 'On the Authenticity of the Desatir, with Remarks on the Account of the Mahabadi Religion', Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, Vol. II, p. 372.

[4] Ibid, p. 342.

[5] Ibid, p. 373.

consider no history as authentic that is not founded in one way or another on contemporary evidence, and to hold the authority of all original history as decreasing in proportion to the remoteness of the time of its composition from the event described and to the number of intermediate witnesses through which the facts recorded in it have passed.'[1] Later in life Erskine went a step further: it was not merely by the comparison of contemporary, but 'if possible, rival writers that truth can be elicited in history.[2] Moreover, historical writings had to be assessed in their relation to the predilections of their authors; the opinions of the authors were often informed and coloured by their motives. Erskine was cautious in accepting the testimony of Bairam Khan's rivals for his activities.[3] From Abul Fazl Erskine did not expect an impartial account of Haji Muhammad: Abul Fazl was 'so much a partizan' of Humayun and Bairan Khan that he could not have given an impartial account of the transactions of Haji Muhammad who stood in Bairam Khan's way.[4] Similarly, he did not repose uncritical confidence in the evidence provided by Bairam Khan's 'idolators', where his enemies or rivals

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[1] 'On the Sacred Books and Religion of the Parsis', Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, II, p.303.

[2] Erskine's letter of 17th April 1835 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, Box 3F, Packet 43.

[3] Erskine's letter of 2nd August 1840 to Elphinstone, ibid, Box 3H, Packet 53.

[4] House of Taimur, II, p. 398, fn.

were concerned.[1] Haidar Mirza's Tarikh-i-Rashidi was 'an excellent corrective' to the history of Babur, the correctness of whose memoirs Erskine regarded as certain, 'but whose views may have been warped by his interest and prejudices.'[2] He was unwilling to form an opinion of Himu's character from the works of the historians of the 'House of Taimur' for they were bound to misrepresent or only partially represent the character of one against whom they were prejudiced for 'his having long been the prop of the Afghan dynasty, and the most formidable enemy of the line of Taimur'[3]

His specific and critical evaluation of sources naturally enabled Erskine to present a more accurate picture of the reigns of Humayun and Babur than had hitherto been possible. Moreover, Erskine could make a considerable advance in the existing knowledge of the subject by his use of hitherto untapped sources. He was the first historian to draw from Tarikh-i-Rashidi and Jauhar's Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat. From Tarikh-i-Rashidi he was able to fill the lacunae in European knowledge of Taimur's successors. Humayun's activities after

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[1] Erskine's letter of 2nd August 1840 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, Box 3E, Packet 53.

[2] Erskine's letter of 10th July 1835 to Elphinstone, ibid, Box 3F, Packet 43.

[3] House of Taimur, II, pp. 490-91.

his defeat by Shir Shah were rich in details primarily because of the use of the Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat. Erskine was the first historian to make any substantial use of the Tarikh-i-Sind. This enabled him to give a detailed narrative of Babur's conquest of the Kandahar and of the Arghun settlement in Sind and Multan for the first time. Indeed, the great merit of the House of Taimur consists in Erskine's extensive and judicious use of Persian sources.

Though Erskine insisted that his history 'draws through the maze of facts without aspiring to philosphy or general view',[1] the House of Taimur and the 'Introduction' to Memoirs are rich in concepts which indicate his philosophy of history. Erskine regarded history in the light of the idea of progress. His conception of social evolution reflects the influence of Adam Smith, John Millar and Adam Ferguson. In common with Smith he held that society had advanced from rudeness to civilization. He shares the views of Smith, Ferguson and Millar on the different stages in social development. Smith had postulated - in this he was followed by Ferguson and Millar - four stages of society, namely,

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[1] Erskine's letter of 2nd July 1836 to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Papers, Box 3G, Packet No. 49.

'hunting, pasturage, farming, and commerce.'[1] Erskine, too, views the pastoral, agricultural and commercial types as representing different levels of development from rudeness to civilization. The great chain of mountains in central Asia he regards as 'the boundary between the pastoral and civilised nations'.[2] In the pastoral range'we find tribes who, down to the present day, wander over their extensive region as their forefathers did, little if at all more refined than they appear to have been at the very dawn of history.'[3] In contradistinction to the pastoral range, Erskine mentions 'flourishing cities and cultivated fields' as two of the notable features of the civilized nations.[4] Again, trade and commerce in his view were 'strong proof of comparative civilization.'[5]

The progress of society from rudeness to civilization, in Erskine's view, was the product of geographical and psychological factors. In attributing social forms to both geographical and psychological factors, Erskine avoids the geographical determinism of Montesquieu and cultural deter-

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[1] Pascal, Roy, 'Property and Society: The Scottish Historical School of the Eighteenth Century', The Modern Quarterly, Vol. I (1938), pp. 170,173.

[2] Memoirs (King's ed) p. xliv

[3] Loc. cit.

[4] Loc. cit.

[5] House of Taimur, I, p. 101.

minism of Hume; this brings him close to Adam Ferguson who did not attribute the development of social forms to any single factor. In Erskine's view the nature of soil and climate were of great importance in determining social forms. He notices 'the powerful influence of a rich soil and happy climate in promoting civilisation[1].' The nature of labour required was also one of the determining factors in Erskine's view of progress. This is suggested by the fact of his having mentioned 'the labour of providing for subsistence' as one of the circumstances which impeded progress in the mountainous region beyond Kashmir .[2]

The nature of the soil and of climate were important determinants because on them was dependent the wealth and opulence to society. Erskine shared the views of Adam Smith and French Economists on the value of opulence for the civilization and happiness of mankind. [3] Also he held in common with Smith and Ferguson that the sequence of society is from necessity to luxury.[4] Refinement came in the wake of the successful provision of the necessities of life.[5] Indeed, man's

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[1] Memoirs, Introduction, p. xvii

[2] Memoirs, (King's ed.) p. xlv.

[3] Bury, The Idea of Progress, pp. 220-21.

[4] Fay, C.R. Adam Smith and the Scotland of his day, Cambridge 1956, p. 84.

[5] This is specifically suggested by the drift of Erskine's review article on Tod's Annals of Rajasthan. He remarks that the British were 'in a haste to teach them (Indians) refinements while they are yet in want of necessaries of life'. The Edinburgh Review, Vol. 56 (1832-33) p. 96

attainments in philosophy, science, literature and poetry, in Erskine's view, presupposed 'many of the comforts of wealth and abundance'.[1] In the valley of Kashmir 'such has been the effect of the plenty and ease' resulting from 'a rich soil and happy climate' that it 'has not only been always famous for the richness of its productions, and the skill of its manufacturers, but was, at one period, the seat of a considerable empire; and its histories furnish us with a long catalogue of its authors on every art and in every department of literature, some of whom are still held in deserved estimation.'[2]

Intercourse between various societies was an other important element in Erskine's view of progress. In common with Hume Montesquieu, and Turgot he held that isolation impeded change in society.[3] Amongst the circumstances which had 'stifled' 'the first seeds of improvement' amongst the inhabitants of the mountainous region between his 'pastoral and civilised nations', Erskine enumerates 'the remoteness of their scattered habitations, and the limited means of intercourse with each other.[4] He also notices the absence

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[1] Memoirs, Introduction, p. xvi.

[2] Ibid, p. xvii

[3] Becker, H.P. and Barnes, H.E. Social Thought from lore to Science, 1961, Vol. I, pp. 408-11.

[4] Memoirs (King's ed.)p. xlv.

of commercial relations between the mountainous regions and their neighbouring states.[1] On the other hand, contact with superior civilizations inevitably favoured progress. In Erskine's view 'the course of five hundred years, from the days of the Samanian dynasty to the birth of Babur, gave ample space for that corruption or improvement[2] of the language, which a daily and regular intercourse with a more refined people in the common business of life must necessarily produce[3]'. In this connection it is significant to note that in Erskine's opinion etymological studies could elucidate 'the spirit and genius' of various nations.[4]

Though attention to the mode of subsistence is the distinguishing feature of Erskine's approach to the dynamic of social progress, he does not indicate any definitive sense of economic causation in the formation of various types of societies. The reason for the Turks being a pastoral people, in Erskine's view, was their preference for pastoral to agricultural life; they were averse to agriculture.[5]

Lacking insights into economic processes, Erskine was nevertheless able to discern the importance of economic factors

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[1] Loc. cit.

[2] The context makes it evident that he regarded the infusion of Arabic and Persian words into Turki as progressive.

[3] Memoirs, (King's ed) p. xxviii

[4] Erskine's Diary, f.30.

[5] House of Taimur, I, pp. 19-20.

in history. Unlike some of his successors,[1] he does not see religious differences as the motivating force in the struggle between Sher Shah and Humayun. The conflict he ascribes to the fact that the interests of 'a rich, powerful and numerous class' were at stake.[2] The Afghans were struggling 'to hurl destruction on the hated invaders whose success must infallibly wrest from the whole Afghan population of India, not their political power only, but their very estates and property.'[3] In common with Montesquieu and Heeren, Erskine regarded commerce an important factor in history. In his view the prosperity of the kingdom of Gujrat enabled its rulers to exercise 'extraordinary influence' on its neighbours.[4] Besides a fertile soil and a favourable climate, the kingdom of Gujrat possessed 'the great emporia of Cambay, Diu, and Surat . . (which) had enriched it with the most active commerce of any portion of India. The greater part of the trade of that country with Persia, Arabia, Africa, the Red Sea, and Europe, besides an active coasting trade, passed through its harbours; and the various commodities imported from these regions were conveyed over Hindustan, and the north of the Dhkhan, through its provinces

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[1] James Talboys Wheeler, for instance. See chapter V.

[2] House of Taimur, II, p.211.

[3] Loc. cit., See also p. 4.

[4] House of Taimur, II, p. 21.

and by its merchants. The benefit of this trade overflowed upon the country, which became a garden and enriched the treasury of the prince.'[1] No wonder the rulers of Gujrat 'could raise armies, and subsidise troops, with a facility apparently disproportional to its extent'.[2] This, of course, enabled Gujrat to exert influence on its neighbours.

Also Erskine was able to appreciate to some extent the correlation of certain forms of property with social and political institutions. He writes, 'it is remarkable how much influence the state of landed property has on the moral and political character of a people'.[3] The nature of landed property 'is one of the elements without which the philosopher cannot form a perfect idea of . . manners.'[4] He attributed the great disparity between the pay scales of high public officials of Britain and France to the existence of the law of primogeniture in Britain and its absence in France. The law of primogeniture, Erskine writes in his diary, 'keeps up a large class of rich proprietors in England, so great, as to make society take its rule from them. Their stile (sic) of living is the regulation. Of course, all public function-

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[1] House of Taimur, II, p.21

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Erskine's letter of 17th April 1835 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers (IOL), MSS. Eur. F. 88, Box 3F, Packet 43.

[4] Loc. cit.

aries must be paid at this monopoly rate.'[1]

It was his assumption that the state of landed property determined the nature of political institutions which underlay Erskine's view that the absence of an hereditary nobility in India was partly responsible for absolute despotism in India. It may be pointed out that Robertson in History of Charles V - a work which Erskine read while writing his history - had suggested that by 'discovering in what state property was at any particular period, we may determine with precision what was the degree of power possessed by the king or the nobility at that juncture.'[2] Deriving his views undoubtedly from Bernier, Erskine emphasized that the rank and wealth of nobles emanated from the king and not from any hereditary possessions.[3] This prevented the nobles from becoming an incorporate political body opposed to the king. On the other hand, the rank of nobility in Britain 'being hereditary, gave them both permanence and cohesion, and enabled them to act in concert 'as a body with common interest'.[4] In his views on the rôle of the institution of nobility Erskine seems to be following Robertson, in his introduction 'The Progress of Society in Europe' to his History of the Emperor Charles V

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[1] Diary, f. 15.

[2] Quoted in Roy Pascal's 'Property and Society: the Scottish Historical School of the Eighteenth Century', The Modern Quarterly, Vol. I, 1938, p.177.

[3] House of Taimur, II, pp. 552-54.

[4] Ibid, p. 554.

(1769)[1].

Erskine regarded a regular professional army as another check on the absolutism of the king. This is apparent from his comments on the Janissaries in Turkey.[2] He was perhaps following Adam Smith who regarded professional armies as 'a deduction from the law of the progress of society.'[3]

By underlining the absence of 'free institutions' amongst the Mughals Erskine strengthened the idea of oriential despotism found in Montesquieu whose work presumably informed Erskine's conception of the subject before he came to study Indian history. His argument assumes a circular form. The nobility is entirely dependent on the will of the ruler for its very existence and the will of the ruler is untrammeled because the nobility is so utterly dependent upon it.[4]

However, Erskine's presuppositions did not colour his ideas on the subject of land tenures under the Mughals. He gives an accurate account of the rights in landed property; there were 'two separate and legal rights in the land.'[5]

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[1] The Progress of Society in Europe, ed. Felix Gilbert, Chicago, London, 1972, pp. 131, 145.

[2] House of Taimur, II, p.555.

[3] Duncan Forbes, 'Scientific Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar' Cambridge Journal, Vol. VII, 1953-4, p. 661.

[4] See pp. 552-53 in the House of Taimur, Vol. II.

[5] Ibid, Vol. I, p. 529.

First, the right of the ryot or cultivator who held the land by hereditary succession despite ruler's absolute right in theory.[1] The right of the government extended to 'a portion of the produce collected from villages, or smaller zamindars, or separate ryots.'[2] Erskine's insight into the nature of land tenures was unlikely to have been derived primarily from any of the sources utilized by him for the House of Taimur. He owed it partly to Briggs' work on land tenures[3] which contains a good exposition of the subject[4] and one which Erskine held in esteem.[5] In addition his personal experiences in India had clarified his ideas on the subject. The 'best notion' that Erskine gained on the subject of land tenures in India was 'during the progress of the Law Committee, when examining the holdings of individuals, of villages and districts.'[6]

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[1] House of Taimur, I, p. 529.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Briggs, John, The Present Land-Tax in India considered as a measure of Finance in order to show its effects on the government and people of that country, and on the Commerce of Great Britain', London, 1830.

[4] Ibid, pp. 108-40, Chapter entitled 'On the Land-tax of the Mahomedans'.

[5] Erskine's Diary, f. 25.

[6] Erskine's letter of November 10, 1837 to Elphinstone - Elphinstone Letters (IOL) MSS. Eur. F 88, Box 3, Packet 49.

Erskine's exposition of the nature of landed tenures was a definite advance on Elphinstone who in his History of India had concentrated on the assessment and administration of revenue and was silent upon the subject of tenures. The House of Taimur also supersedes Elphinstone's history not only in the reigns of Babur and Humayun, but in that of Shir Shah for whose reign Erskine had the same sources at his disposal as Elphinstone. Though Erskine regretted the paucity of materials for 'affording a view of the internal administration' of Shir Shah - he was not familiar with Abbas Khan Sarwani's Tarikh-i-Shir Shahi he has given an overall more cogent and detailed account of Shir Shah than is to be found in Elphinstone. Erskine had made a more thorough search of the available sources than Elphinstone had done.

Erskine's extensive use of Persian sources was appreciated by his contemporaries. Many of the materials in the House of Taimur, it was aptly remarked by a reviewer, 'have now first been disentombed from Oriental languages.'[1] Another reviewer mentioned Erskine's 'determination to exhaust the treasures of authority'.[2] Also his contemporaries were quick to discern the philosophical overtone of his work. A scholar

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[1] The Athenaeum: Journal of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts, London 1854, p. 772.

[2] Allen's Indian Mail, Vol. XII (1854) London, p. 404.

of 'philosophical mind', Erskine 'exhibits a concentration of deep and various learning',[1] The House of Taimur was distinguished not only by 'deep research', but also by 'pregnant learning' and 'a considerable knowledge of mankind.'[2] These various qualities combined to make the House of Taimur 'a highly valuable contribution to a portion of history but little known.'[3] Even in its incomplete form the House of Taimur, a French reviewer remarks, 'est une des contributions les plus importantes a l'histoire de l'Inde qui aient paru depuis longtemps'.[4] It was thought Erskine's history 'may take its place by the side of Gibbon's great work.'[5] The lives of Humayun and Babur 'are not likely to be superseded.'[6]

Distinguished though it was by research and learning, the House of Taimur was not a popular work. It was 'unreservedly admitted' by contemporary reviewers that the House of Taimur 'is scarce likely to meet from the outside public, the acceptance which is so justly its due.'[7] That the House of

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[1] The Athenaeum: Journal of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts, 1854, p. 771.

[2] The Calcutta Review , Vol. XXV (1855), Calcutta, p. 286.

[3] Allen's Indian Mail, Vol. XII, p. 404.

[4] Journal Asiatique, tome V (cinquieme serie), 1855, p. 400.

[5] Allen's Indian Mail, Vol. XII,p. 404.

[6] The Athenaeum, 1854, p. 772.

[7] The Calcutta Review, Vol. XXV (1855), p. 289.

Taimur was not a popular work is apparent from the fact that a demand for a second edition never arose despite the limited issue of 750 copies only.[1]

However, Erskine's pertinacity in using Persian sources earned him a permanent place in British historiography on Indo-Muslim rule. The House of Taimur as a monograph based on Persian sources by a British scholar remained unrivalled till the appearance of William Irvine's The Later Mughals in 1921-22 and W.H. Moreland's The Agrarian System of Moslem India, in 1929. It is a reflection of Erskine's scholarship and knowledge that long before Bibliotheca India series made its appearance, he had suggested the preparation of 'a Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Indicae,'[2] Years of work had convinced him that 'the true way to begin' a thorough research in Indian history was the preparation of critical editions and translations of oriental writers,[3] a work which Elliot was partly attempting to perform in India.

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[1] Maitland Erskine's letter of 28th June 1854 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 88, Box 5B, Packet 17.

[2] House of Taimur, I, Preface, p.vii.

[3] Erskine's letter of December 6, 1840 to Elphinstone, Elphinstone Papers, (IOL), MSS.Eur. F.88, Box 4B, Packet 8.

Henry Miers Elliot (1808-1853)

Henry Miers Elliot's Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Muhammedan India appeared in 1849.[1] In 1853 he published at Cape Town the Appendix to the Arabs in Sind, Vol. III, Part I of the Historians of India.[2] Between 1866-77 appeared the magnum-opus, with which his name will always be associated, the History of India as told by its own Historians (8 vols)[3], edited, arranged and completed by John Dowson.[4]

The Bibliographical Index and more so Elliot & Dowson have been variously assessed by successive generations of historians of medieval India. Elliot & Dowson 'revolutionises our knowledge of the subject' - so wrote H.G. Keene in his preface to his A Sketch of the History of India in 1885.[5] Stanley Lane-Poole regarded it as 'an invaluable and priceless source' which 'no modern historian of India can afford

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[1] It was published by the Baptist Press, Calcutta. Henceforth this work will be cited simply as the Bibliographical Index.

[2] This work has been referred to as the Arabs in Sind in our study.

[3] Published by Trubner & Co., London. Hereafter this work will be cited as Elliot & Dowson.

[4] Dowson's contribution to the work will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

[5] p. xviii.

to neglect.'[1] Again, he states elsewhere, 'this magnificent work for the first time establishes the history of India during the Mohammedan period on a sure and trustworthy foundation.'[2] S.H. Hodivala deemed a commentary on Elliot & Dowson to be an essential prolegomena to the study of medieval India.[3] However, Khaliq Ahmad Nizami in modern times, while appreciative of the usefulness of the work, finds Elliot and Dowson's magnum-opus to have 'blurred our historical perspective'.[4] K.M. Ashraf regards Elliot's works as expressive of a systematic subjection of historical studies to 'wilful distortion' for purposes of British imperialism.[5] Despite Nizami and Ashraf's denunciations, some modern historians continue to rely substantially on Elliot & Dowson without going to Persian texts.[6] The fact that there

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[1] Medieval India under Mohammedan Rule (A.D. 712-1764) (The Story of the Nations Series), London 1906, p.vi.

[2] Stanley Lane Poole's article on H.M. Elliot in the DNB, Vol. XVII, 1889, p.258.

[3] Hodivala, S.H. Studies in Indo-Muslim History: A Critical Commentary on Elliot and Dowson's History of India as told by its own Historians, Bombay 1939, Preface, p.v.

[4] Elliot & Dowson, Vol. II, reprinted with (a) Introduction by Prof. Mohammed Habib, (b) Commentary by the late Prof. S.H. Hodivala, (c) Supplement by Khaliq Ahmad Nizimi, Aligarh 1952, p.764.

[5] His Presidential Address to the medieval section of the Indian History Congress - Proceedings of the Twenty-third Session Aligarh 1960, Calcutta 1961, p.145

[6] See for instance John F. Richard's use of Elliot & Dowson in his article 'The Economic History of the Lodi Period: 1451-1526', The Journal of Economic History of the Orient, 1965, pp. 47-67. Romila Thapar has also made a considerable use of Elliot & Dowson in her A History of India, Pelican Books 1966. See her bibliography for chapters 10-14, pp. 364-68.

have been varied, even conflicting, assessments of Elliot and Dowson's work and that the work is still being much used by modern historians of India indicates the need of making a fresh appraisal of the reasons for the appearance of these volumes and of their character.

Henry Miers Elliot, born in 1808, was the third son of John and Eliza Elliot's fifteen children. Eliza Elliot was a younger daughter of J.C. Lettsom (1744-1815), a quaker physician and a well-known philanthropist.[1] John Elliot (c. 1764-1829) was the head of the porter brewery Elliot & Co., Pimlico.[2] In the words of the reviewer of Elliot & Dowson in The Saturday Review, the brewery Elliot & Co. 'being interpreted, signifies in the midst of large vessels of the kind which Johnson described as "not a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice."'[3] Besides being the head of the brewery, John Elliot was for several years treasurer of the Westminster Hospital and colonel-commandant of the Westminster Volunteer Cavalry.[4] He was a Fellow of the Royal Society and at one time parliamentary candidate for the City

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[1] DNB, Vol. XI (1921 ed.) pp. 1013-15.

[2] 'Obituary notice of John Elliot', Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 99, Part I (1829), p. 379.

[3] Vol. XXIV (1867), p. 158.

[4] Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 99 (1829), p. 379.

of Westminster.[1]

With his wealthy background Elliot entered in 1818 as a Scholar the College of William of Wykeham, Winchester, where his eldest brother John Lettsom Elliot was already a 'Commoner'[2]. It is important to note that at Winchester Elliot was a scholar in contradistinction to being a commoner.[3] In the words of a Wykehamist, there used to be a great competition to be enrolled as a scholar. A scholar had several privileges, 'the greatest of which was the chance of gaining a fellowship at New College, Oxford.'[4] Elliot remained at Winchester for eight years. Supposedly he distinguished himself academically as well as in extra-curricular activities but it seems that he distinguished himself more in extra-curricular than in academic activities. In this respect it is important to note that there is no specific mention of his academic distinctions in the testimonial given by the master of Winchester when Elliot was nominated to the Indian civil service. Nevertheless, he is spoken of as 'an ornament' to the college in the Warden's testimonial.[5] Before he left Winchester he was one of the

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[1] Loc. cit., Boase, F. Modern English Biography, Vol. I, p.978.

[2] Winchester Commoners (1813-1835), 1893, p.10.

[3] vide the certificate of the master of Winchester College, Haileybury College: Applications etc., J/1/43 (1827), Petition No. 48. IOL.

[4] R.B.M. School-life at Winchester, London 1866,p.28.

[5] Haileybury College: Applications, etc., J/1/43 (1827) Petition No. 48. IOL.

senior praefects of the college.[1] He won two silver medals for speaking in his college.[2]

From Winchester Elliot was supposed to go to New College, Oxford, which was regarded as 'an outlying portion' of the Wykehamist institution.[3] Leaving Winchester in July 1826 Elliot qualified for admission to New College, Oxford. However, that year there was no vacancy for him in the college.[4] Presumably he was low on the list of candidates who qualified for admission to the New College in 1826. Before making another attempt to enter the University in the following year Elliot decided to join the Indian civil service.

Elliot's choice of career in India may be viewed against the background of his father's long association with some directors of the East India Company. Elliot had known two directors from his childhood.[5] John Elliot probably had business connections with the East India Company. It may be noted that in 1840s Elliot & Co. was exporting porter to

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[1] 'Obituary Notice' in Allen's Indian Mail, Vol. XII, p.81

[2] Loc. cit., Edward Thomas's 'Notice of Sir Henry M. Elliot', Elliot & Dowson, I, pp. xxviii-xxix.

[3] Allen's Indian Mail, Vol. XII, p.81

[4] ibid, Vol. XII, p.81.

[5] Haileybury College: Applications, etc., J/1/43 (1827), Petition No. 48, Elliot's form of interrogation.

India through the East India Company.[1] However, Elliot's decision to go to India seems to have been prompted by the occurrence of a rare opportunity. In 1826 when Elliot had failed to secure a place in Oxford and was, therefore, faced with choosing his career, the Company's government in India was seeking reinforcement. The number of civil servants then being trained at the East India College Haileybury was not sufficient. Parliament met the emergency by the unprecedented measure of allowing the Company to recruit civil servants from outside Haileybury.[2] This concession allowed Elliot to apply for direct admission to Indian civil service. Elliot made a determined effort to win selection. It is evident from the fact that in less than one year he learnt more than one Indian language[3], even though a knowledge of oriental languages was not a pre-requisite for the group taking advantage of the sanction of 1826.[4] His linguistic acquirements, indeed, proved very advantageous in securing him the first position amongst those who were

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[1] See, for instance, bond by John Lettsom Elliot (on behalf of Messrs. Elliot & Co.) Miscellaneous Bonds or Agreements, Vol. 129, no. 173. IOL.

[2] DNB, Vol. VI, p. 676; Edward Thomas's 'Notice of Sir Henry M. Elliot', Elliot & Dowson, I, p. xxviii-xxix.

[3] Loc. cit.

[4] Haileybury: Minutes and Reports of Committee of College, J/2/6 (1827), No. 18, IOL.

admitted to Company's civil service under the parliamentary sanction of 1826.[1]

Elliot arrived in India on October 28, 1827. Till May 1828 he was at Fort William College, Calcutta where he obtained medals for proficiency in Persian and Arabic.[2] His first appointment was as assistant to the magistrate and collector of Barielly where he remained from May 1828 to February 1829.[3] From February 1829 to July 1830 he was assistant to the Political Resident and Commissioner at Delhi.[4] In July 1830 he was transferred to Meerut as officiating registrar and assistant to the magistrate.[5] For one year he officiated successively as the magistrate, collector and deputy collector of Meerut before, in January 1832, he was appointed head assistant to the magistrate and collector of Muradabad.[6] From Muradabad he was transferred

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[1] Haileybury Certificates, J/1/103, p.120 (IOL); Edward Thomas's 'Notice of Sir Henry M. Elliot', Elliot & Dowson, I, p. xxviii; DNB, VI, p. 676.

[2] Register of the Hon. E.I. Co's Bengal Civil Servants, 1790-1842, Calcutta 1844, p. xliii.

[3] ibid., p. iii

[4] Loc. cit.

[5] Loc. cit.

[6] Loc. cit.

to Bareilly in March 1833 to return again for a few months in 1834. In April 1834 he was transferred to Meerut as officiating deputy collector. In Meerut he remained till November 1836 as a settlement officer.[1] In December 1836 he was promoted to the secretaryship of the Sudder Board of Revenue at Allahabad where he later became the superintendent of the Revenue surveyors office, too.[2] With the transference of the Sudder Board of Revenue from Allahabad to Agra, Elliot came to Agra in 1843. Later he became a member of the Sudder Board of Revenue at Agra.

In April 1847 Elliot's work in the revenue department came to an end with his appointment as Secretary to the Government of India in the foreign department.[3] In this capacity he accompanied first Lord Hardinge and later Lord Dalhousie to the Panjab.[4] During Hardinge's governor-generalship Elliot drew up a detailed memoir on the resources of the Panjab. Hardinge greatly appreciated Elliot's memoir and wrote to the Court of Directors that the compilation of such a document could not have been entrusted to 'an abler

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[1] Register of the Hon. E.I.Co's Bengal Civil Servants 1790-1842, Calcutta, 1844, p.iii.

[2] Agra Civil Servants, L/F/10,1841.

[3] Bengal Civil Servants, L/F/10/31. IOL.

[4] DNB, Vol. VI, p.676.

or more impartial officer than Mr. Elliot, whose reputation and experience in all details of the civil administration stands very high.'[1] Elliot elicited still higher praise from Dalhousie for his services concerning the Panjab. In February 1849, he, along with H.M. Lawrence, was employed to negotiate the treaty with the Sikh chiefs whereby Panjab was to be finally annexed to the British empire.[2] Lord Dalhousie praised Elliot's 'great ability, temper, tact and energy' in his negotiations with the Sikh chiefs. Indeed, in Dalhousie's opinion 'very great credit is due to Mr. Elliot for the manner in which he accomplished the duty he was charged with.'[3] For his services in the second Sikh war Elliot was knighted in 1849.[4] Simultaneously with his foreign secretaryship Elliot was appointed in October 1848 in charge of the entire civil department with the governor-general and a member of the council of

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[1] Hardinge's letter of 7th December 1847, Political Letters Received from India, L/P & S/6/15, p. 587. IOL.

[2] vide Dalhousie's letter of March 24th, 1849 to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, Bengal Secret Letters, 1st series, L/P & S/5, Vol. 34. p.154.

[3] Dalhousie's letter of March 24th, 1849 to the Secretary Committee of the Court of Directors, Bengal Secret Letters, L/P & S/5, Vol. 34. p.157.

[4] Home Correspondence Honours for Indian Services, L/P & S/3, Vol. 24, p. 365.

education in March 1848.[1] In 1852 ill-health compelled Elliot to go on leave and he went to the Cape of Good Hope for a change of climate. There he died from the effects of chronic dysentry on 20th December 1853.[2] There was some suspicion that Elliot had been poisoned by Zinat Mahal Begam, a younger queen of the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah. Elliot had supported the claims of Bahadur Shah's eldest surviving son Mirza Fakhrud-din against Mirza Jiwan Bakht, the son of Zinat Mahal Begam.[3] Elliot's premature death cut short his brilliant career. A few months before his death he had been nominated to the post of Lt. Governor of the North-Western Provinces.[4] Regarded as 'one of the brightest ornaments of the Indian Civil Service' by a member of Governor-General's Council, Dalhousie himself lamented Elliot's early death on account of his attachment to Elliot 'as a personal friend and high appreciation of his qualities as a public officer.'[5] It may be remarked that Elliot was

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[1] Bengal Civil Servants, L/F/10/33, IOL.

[2] Board's Collections, Vol. 2583 (154295 to 15445), No. 154435, IOL.

[3] Spear, T.G.P. Twilight of the Mughuls: Studies in Late Mughul Delhi, Cambridge 1951, pp. 58-59, 163.

[4] Board's Collections, no. 154435. IOL.

[5] ibid.

regarded as Dalhousie's 'right hand man' and 'most brilliant and genial of private friends.'[1]

Elliot's official duties both in the revenue and foreign departments greatly influenced the course and content of his Indian studies. The nature of his official duties in the revenue department of the government of the North-Western Provinces stimulated powerfully his interest in the history and customs of certain sections at least of Indian society in that province. During the first two decades of British rule in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces the revenue settlement had been made for short periods from three to four years without any substantial survey or enquiry into the assessment of revenue or ascertainment of proprietary rights. However, according to Regulation VII of 1822 the British government decided to make a long term revenue assessment based on a detailed survey and inquiry into proprietary rights.[2] The Regulation VII of 1822 stipulated that a survey of the actual produce of the land and of

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[1]Hunter, W.W. The Marquess of Dalhousie (Rulers of India Series), Oxford 1890, p.46.

[2]Husain, Mohammed Imtiaz, The formation of British Land-Revenue Policy in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces of Northern India, 1801-1833, a Ph.D. thesis in the University of London, 1964. pp. 191, 209-10, 215-16, 238-39 and passim; Baden-Powell, B.H. The Land-Systems of British India, Oxford, 1892, Vol. II, pp. 11-28.

the cost of production was to form the basis of assessment. However, the process of assessment was found to be tedious and lengthy with the result that very little progress was made for several years in the direction of long-term settlement. Consequently, in 1833 (Regulation IX) the basis of assessment was changed.[1] The assessment was no longer to be based on an actual survey of the cost and production, but on a system of average rent and rates fixed for different classes of soil. It was in accordance with Regulation IX of 1833 that the first long-term settlement was made between 1833-49. Simultaneously, the government undertook an inquiry into the titles of the mafeedars, land-holders who held their lands free of any payment of revenue, with a view to possible resumption of their lands.

One of the outcomes of the revenue settlement and inquiry into proprietary rights in the North-Western Provinces was that British revenue officers were coming into far greater intimacy with the people than at any time since the acquisition of the 'Ceded and Conquered' territory. An inquiry into the proprietary rights necessitated a much deeper understanding of the habits and customs of the rural population in a general social and historical perspective than was essential in the routine collection of revenues.

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[1]The whole of this paragraph is based on I.M. Husain, op. cit., pp. 240-334; Baden-Powell's op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 11-28.

Thus, Elliot's intimate involvement with the entire problem of revenue settlement and inquisition into rent-free lands, first as the settlement office in Meerut between 1834 and 1836 and later as secretary to the Sudder Board of Revenue and Superintendent of the Revenue surveyors, impelled him to delve into India's past.

Thus, for instance, he studied the history of al-tamgha grants to ascertain whether certain grants were valid. Having discovered al-tamgha to have been first mentioned in Jahangir's times, Elliot inferred that it could not have come in general usage before Shah Jahan's reign.[1] Hence, 'we are justified in looking on any Altumgha grant older than Shahjehan with strong suspicion.'[2] Similarly, Elliot's attempts to reconstruct the boundaries of various parganas and dasturs in Akbar's time were related to revenue problems. A historical knowledge of the boundaries of these fiscal divisions Elliot used for determining the claims of zamindars and mafeedars. For instance, a mention together of two parganas in a grant purporting to be from the reign of Jahangir aroused Elliot's suspicions about the validity of the zamindari sunnud. He noticed that such a combination was non-existent in Akbar's time, and 'could

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[1] Supplemental Glossary, p.17.

[2] Ibid, p.17.

scarcely have been used in the fourth year of Jehangir.'[1] Similarly, his curiosity to investigate the state of zamindari in Akbar's time was a utilitarian one.

Indeed, Elliot held that if the East India Company was to maximise its revenues, to conciliate its Indian rural aristocracy (defined as zamindars, mafeedars and other landed receivers of income) by a show of justice and policy, it must know more about rural Indian society in its upper section. This is manifest in his article 'On the Resumption of Rent-free Tenures' and his Supplemental Glossary.

Though Elliot professed that his purpose in writing his article on rent-free tenures was to advocate the interests of mafeedars,[2] his real aim was to put forward a case against any ill-considered resumptions. He viewed 'injudicious' and hasty resumptions frought with political mischief for British rule in India. He drew attention to wide-spread suspicion and alarm amongst mafeedars and people deriving indirect benefits from rent-free tenures, that the real purpose of the government was to resume their lands

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[1] Supplemental Glossary, p. 188.

[2] 'On the Resumption of Rent-Free Tenures', MUM, p. 339. Authorship vide 'Notes on contributions and authors supplied by Sir R. Burn'. The list is attached to the IOL copies, of the MUM. (S.T. 890). The authorship of this particular article is confirmed by a reference in Elliot Papers MSS. Eur. F.57, p. 309, IOL.

under the pretext of investigating the validity of their tenures.[1] 'The alarm', Elliot writes, 'is absurd enough, .. but if these feelings are excited merely because the edict has gone forth, directing inquiries into the validity of these tenures, what should we expect if any Collectors were, in the fancied discharge of their duties, to put in practice anything like an indiscriminate resumption?'[2] He, therefore, strongly asserted the need of tempering 'The harsh and unpleasant' task of resumption with 'mild and conciliatory measures.'[3] Indeed, Elliot saw in the manner of resumptions an opportunity 'of manifesting to the people, that the real object of our government is not to raise a small portion of revenue, to the inevitable ruin of helpless individuals, and that justice and moderation are not incompatible with the best interest of the state.'[4]

It was in the interest of British government, according to Elliot, not to alienate any land revenue in perpetuity. With the utilitarians he was opposed to any permanent settlement. However, the undercurrents which informed Elliot's attitude on the subject were very different from

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[1] 'On the Resumption of Rent-Free Tenures', MUM, 1835, pp. 374-75.

[2] ibid, p. 375.

[3] ibid, p. 374.

[4] ibid, p. 374.

those which informed the Utilitarian view-point. Unlike the Utilitarians Elliot was not much concerned with whether the rent-receiving landed class was a parasitic one, but with the political significance of its existence. Elliot regarded any permanent alienation of land-revenue in favour of the landed class as a potential threat to British supremacy in India. We may quote Elliot for a thought, 'crude and perhaps not one which would openly avow.'[1]

He writes:

> 'The consideration which ought to bias the determination respecting the extension of the P.S. (Permanent Settlement) is how far it is advisable, on grounds solely of political expediency, to deprive Government of the power of checking the accumulation of wealth, which powerful zamindars might apply to purposes subversive of our Govt. .. at present we have the power to check it effectively at a recurring settlement, if it is found to result in a disposition to enlist in armed followers, and assume a power & authority incompatible with our Rule. The deprivation of the ways and means would prove the surest damper.'[2]

Elliot's conception of the interests of the British government in India induced him to delve into the history of various zamindaris and land-owning communities of the North-Western Provinces. Elliot's Supplemental Glossary is an example of his interest in the history of the rural aristocracy of the region. For a full understanding of his

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[1] Description of Places, Tribes &C. (Elliot Papers), MSS. Eur. F.57, p.50. IOL.

[2] Loc. cit.

interests as revealed by the Supplemental Glossary, it is desirable to know the circumstances relating to its preparation and publication.

In c. 1840 H.H. Wilson (1786-1860), then librarian to the East India Company, had undertaken to compile a glossary of current judicial and revenue terms in India. In 1842 the Court of Directors invited suggestions and information from British officers in India for Wilson's projected glossary.[1] With the single exception of Elliot, no British officers furnished any substantial information for Wilson's glossary.[2] The information collected and compiled by Elliot for Wilson was published from Agra in 1845 in the form of a Supplement to the Glossary of Indian Terms. Much of the material contained in the Supplemental Glossary was later incorporated by Wilson in his glossary published in 1855. However, Wilson abbreviated, and even omitted, several of Elliot's articles because they were of a 'higher character' than the glossary required. These articles, Wilson maintained, were more germane to the history of India than of any direct relevance to the glossary.[3]

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[1] N.W.P. Lt. Governor's Proceedings in the General Department, Range 214, Vol. 57 (1847), nos. 40-41.

[2] Wilson, H.H. A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, London 1855, p.iv.

[3] ibid., p. iv.

The historical portions of Elliot's Supplemental Glossary excluded from Wilson's glossary pertained mostly to subjects linked with revenue problems and the rural aristocracy. Using Persian sources Elliot had restored not only the fiscal divisions of Akbar's reign which could be of assistance in settling the validity of proprietory claims, but also the state of zamindari as found in Akbar's time.[1] A long discussion has been introduced regarding the al-tamgha and other forms of revenue-free grants.[2] Moreover, besides tracing the history of various agrarian castes,[3] about whom 'we are almost as ignorant .. as we were in the first day of our occupation',[4] Elliot has traced the history of individual families. In this he was prompted by practical considerations. Thus, for instance, having sketched the history of the family of the Raja of Bhudawur from various Persian sources, Elliot infers that the political importance of the Bhudawur family was short-lived and 'though important, they are not of that high importance which they would arrogate to themselves.'[5] This partly underlay Elliot's

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[1] Supplemental Glossary, pp. 185-88 and the map.
[2] ibid., pp. 14-18.
[3] See for instance, pp. 100-101, 146-49, 180-82, ibid.
[4] ibid, Memorandum, p.vi.
[5] ibid, p. 69.

disapproval of British government's bestowal of a rent-free grant of 30 villages to the raja, a grant which 'might perhaps have been more worthily bestowed.'[1]

Elliot's concern historically to treat subjects relevant to contemporary administrative decisions is also manifest in his memoir on the resources of the Panjab drawn in 1847. Entrusted, shortly after assuming the office of Foreign Secretary, with the task of condensing various returns and reports from Lahore Elliot prepared a detailed memorandum of the revenue resources of the Panjab.[2] He traced the region's revenue history from the days of Akbar. His purpose was to gauge the potential revenue capacity of the Panjab in the light of its revenue history. Such an account could sway any future decision on annexation.

Elliot's researches on revenue history and agrarian classes undoubtedly suggested to him the field of study, namely that of Persian histories relating to Indo-Muslim history on which he was later to concentrate. He had appreciated the usefulness of histories in Persian from his own researches. The historical portions of his Supplemental Glossary are based primarily on the evidence of these histories

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[1] Supplemental Glossary, p.69.

[2] Enclosed with Hardinge's letter to the Court of Directors, Political Letters Received from India (1847) L/P & S/6/15, pp. 586-88. IOL.

It was the use of Persian histories that had enabled him successfully to carry on investigations into these subjects of interest. His articles in the Supplemental Glossary on al-tamgha, dastur, historical account of certain zamindari families, and of Delhi and Agra are all founded in detail on Persian sources.

Indeed, for the Supplemental Glossary Elliot had used far more Persian sources than other British scholars had hitherto used in writing their exclusively historical accounts of medieval Muslim India. As Aloys Sprenger (1813-1893), a man possessed of considerable knowledge of Persian and Arabic literature,[1] pointed out, in 1846 Elliot

[1]Aloys Sprenger had studied oriental languages, worked on the military history of Muhammadans and had translated Masaudi's Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems from the Arabic before joining the company's medical service in India 1843. Between 1844 and 1848 he was the principal of the Muhammadan College at Delhi. During this period he published the Technical Terms of the Sufees (Calcutta 1844), an English-Hindustani Grammar (1845), Selections from Arabic Authors (Calcutta 1847). From 1847 to 1849 he was engaged by the Government of India to prepare a catalogue of the manuscripts in the libraries of the Nawab of Awadh. In 1851 appeared Sprenger's Life of Mohammad from original sources and the Gulistan of Saadi. Between 1851-54 he was the Persian translator to the Government of India and principal of the Muhammadan College at Hugli and of the Calcutta 'Madrasa'. He left India in 1857 and was later the professor of oriental languages at the University of Berne and published two works on Muhammad and Arab geography in German in 1861 and 1871 respectively-DNB, Vol. LIII (1898).

possessed 'more extensive knowledge' of Persian histories on India than anybody else whether in Europe or India.[1] With a good knowledge of the subject and situated within an easy reach of some important libraries - he was aware of the rich collection in the Nawab of Awadh's libraries [2]- Elliot decided to concentrate on Persian histories and their collection. Such a venture could serve British interests in India as Elliot conceived them. It should be noted that Elliot undertook a compilation of Persian histories at the cost of not completing the Supplemental Glossary - a measure of the value he himself attached to the Bibliographical Index. Indeed, this neglect to finish the Supplemental Glossary was despite a specific urging by the Court of Directors.[3]

Upto Elliot's time British historians of Muslim India had been indifferent to the agrarian and revenue history of medieval India. Elphinstone's History of India (1841), the best history at its time, was inadequate in those aspects of history which interested Elliot. Elphinstone's history

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[1] 'Manuscripts of the late Sir H. Elliot', JASB, Vol. XXIII (1854), p. 226.

[2] Elliot Papers, Add. MS. 30768, f.5. B.M.

[3] N.W.P. Lt. Governor's Proceedings in the General Department, Range 214, Vol. 72 (June to December 1846), Nos 88-89.

of India almost completely lacked an account of the history of the rural aristocracy and revenue resources under Muslim rule in India. Any systematic account even of the names of fiscal divisions under Muslim rule in India is absent from Elphinstone's History of India. Persian histories as yet unpublished or untranslated constituted an important source for the development of any such historical themes. Consequently, it was of great importance to bring these works to the notice of scholars.

In his concentration on a study of Persian histories Elliot was influenced by academic considerations, too. A bibliographical index of Persian and other oriental historians of India would bring new source-material to the notice of orientalists for general historical purposes and not merely for his own. By collecting and consolidating source-material for Indo-Muslim history he hoped to facilitate the work of succeeding scholars. Like 'the Scriptores Rerum Italicarum, the Auctores Veteres Historiae, the Monumenta Boica, the Recueil des Historiens des Gaules and a hundred other collections of the same kind', Elliot wanted his researches to become

> 'useful depositories of knowledge from which the labour and diligence of succeeding scholars may extract materials for the erection of a better and more solid structure.'[1]

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, pp. viii-ix.

In this respect it is significant to note that Elliot appreciated Elphinstone's use of Khwafi Khan's history for Aurangzib's reign. He noticed that Khwafi Khan had enabled Elphinstone to give a more comprehensive account of the reign of Aurangzib than earlier British historians had been able to give.[1] Elliot's academic concern for collecting and consolidating oriental source-material for a history of Muslim rule in India is particularly evident, too, from his persistent keenness that the libraries of the Nawab of Awadh should be catalogued. It was at his suggestion that A. Sprenger was sent to catalogue the nawab's libraries.[2] The Court of Directors evinced a reluctance on financial grounds, but Elliot impressed upon the court the desirability of rescuing from oblivion 'many very valuable and rare works' contained in the nawab's libraries.[3] In the interests of scholarship, Elliot argued, it was important 'to make known to the world the existence of these buried treasures'.[4] He was anxious that the works in these libraries should be examined and noticed at the first opportunity' before worms and white ants make further ravages than they have already done.[5]

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[1] Add. MS. 30768, f. 133, B.M.

[2] 'Employment of Dr. Sprenger in the examination of the King's libraries at Lucknow', Board's Collections, Vol. 2271, no. 116117.

[3] ibid, p.3.

[4] ibid, p.3.

[5] ibid, p.5.

Elliot's abandonment of any direct researches on subjects related to British interests as he viewed them, was in part due to A. Sprenger, the Principal of the Muhammedan College in Delhi from 1844 to 1847. Dr. Aloys Sprenger, himself possessed an extensive knowledge of oriental literature. The latter discovered Elliot's advantages of official position and of sufficient scholarly acumen for undertaking a bibliography of oriental sources of Muslim Indian history. It was Sprenger who suggested to Elliot the idea of a bibliographical index of Persian histories.[1] To Sprenger, Elliot's debt was indeed great. Sprenger not only gave Elliot the original inspiration, but also assisted him considerably in finding and translating several works as their correspondence shows.[2]

Elliot and Sprenger's original intention was to lithograph 'an uniform edition of the Native Historians of India' with financial assistance from the government of the North-Western Provinces.[3] However, Elliot writes, 'the Education Funds at the disposal of the Government were not sufficient to warrant

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[1] Sprenger, A. Das Leben Und Die Lehre Des Mohammad, Berlin 1869 (2nd ed.), I, p.vii, fn.2.

[2] Add MS. 30, 789, ff. 5-8, 17-18, 21-25, 56-58, 64-65, B.M.

[3] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p.v.

the outlay of so large a sum as the scheme required, and without which it would have been impossible to complete so expensive an understanding.'[1] But in view of Elliot's knowledge of the subject, the government desired that he should prepare an index of the 'Native Historians of India', so that the manuscripts could be 'sought for and deposited in one of our College libraries, to be printed or lithographed hereafter, should circumstances render it expedient'.[2] It was in response to this request from the Government of the North-Western Provinces that Elliot undertook to compile a bibliographical index of oriental works on Muslim Indian history.

Within a few months of undertaking it, Elliot completed the manuscript draft of the index which he submitted to the Lt. Governor of the North-Western Provinces in January 1847 for approval. A comparison of Elliot's manuscript index of 1847, which is extant,[3] and his published work - the Bibliographical Index of 1849 reveals the gradual development of Elliot's ideas and researches on the subject.

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p.v.

[2] ibid, pp v-vi.

[3] Add. MSS. 30,768 - 30,770 (B.M.) -'The draft MS. of the Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Muhammadan India'. Add. MS. 30,768 is the first draft completed by January 1847 as the date of the preface shows. The remaining two volumes contain materials collected by Elliot between 1847 and 1849.

The 'Bibliographical Index' of 1847 merely lists the names of works and occasionally their contents. Apparently in 1847 Elliot's purpose was limited to compiling a list of works without any detailed notices on authors or critical appraisal of works themselves. His aim was to prepare only a small volume listing both 'general' and 'specific' histories of Muslim rule in India upto the advent of the British on the scene. Elliot himself mentions that the 'Bibliographical Index' had no claim to 'completeness' and 'higher aspirations.'[1] He confessed that with several histories mentioned in the work he had 'but a superficial acquaintance, (indeed) many he had never seen'.[2] Of those manuscripts that he had personally examined several were 'imperfect' copies, and only a few had been 'subjected to an entire perusal'.[3] An additional limitation of the Index was that it did not contain information of works to be found in European libraries.[4]

However, the Bibliographical Index published in 1849 contains not only information regarding works in European libraries, but also notices of varying lengths respecting histories mentioned in the nominal index of 1847. The

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[1] Add. MS. 30,768, f.5. B.M.

[2] ibid., f.5 (reverse)

[3] ibid, ff.5-6.

[4] ibid, f. 5 (reverse)

Bibliographical Index includes also translations of extracts from several works. Moreover, Elliot has appended at the end of the Bibliographical Index extracts from many Persian histories discussed in the work. It also includes eight erudite 'Notes' on subjects of contemporary academic interest besides being replete with useful footnotes.

Enlargement of the 'Bibliographical Index' of 1847 both in volume and contents was the outcome of an enforced deferment of publication. Elliot was compelled by absence from Calcutta to delay the publication of the nominal index completed in January 1847.[1] The interim was used by him to enrich the nominal index by collecting and incorporating more information. For this purpose he corresponded with orientalists in England. H.H. Wilson supplied Elliot information concerning oriental works available in the India House library in London.[2] Moreover, Elliot's new status as the secretary to the Government of India in the foreign department helped a more thorough search. It was later observed that Elliot could obtain access through the influence confered by his official position to libraries not open to the public.[3] Furthermore,

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[1] Elliot's letter of 23rd June 1847 to H.H. Wilson, Wilson Papers, MSS. Eur. E. 301, Vol. VI, p.141. IOL.

[2] vide Elliot's letter of 24th January 1848 to H.H. Wilson, ibid, p. 169.

[3] Court of Directors' letter of 18th June 1856 to the Board of Control - Board of Control Letters &C, F/2/3 (1856). IOL.

Sprenger's work in the libraries of the nawab of Awadh proved of substantial help for the Bibliographical Index. Consequently the nominal index of 1846-47 assumed the form of the Bibliographical Index of the Historians of Muhammedan India which was intended to be the first of the four volumes of Elliot's revised and expanded plans.

Elliot expanded his original plan partly because his researches of 1847-48 had impressed upon him the need of a more comprehensive and detailed treatment of the 'Bibliographical Index'. In his efforts to obtain further information, Elliot received from orientalists in Europe and India 'confessions of entire ignorance' on the subject of his enquiry. Hence, he was persuaded that 'it would be useful to append, as far as his knowledge would permit, a few notes to each History .. illustrative of the matter it comprehends, the style, position, and prejudices of the several authors, and the merits or deficiencies of their execution.'[1]

After the publication of the Bibliographical Index Elliot continued further researches on the subject of 'native histories'. He wrote in 1853 that the 'unexpected favour with which the first Volume of this work has been reviewed by the Orientalists of Europe, has induced the

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p.vi.

author to extend his original plan'.[1] In fact, further expansion of the Bibliographical Index had become already inevitable in 1849. Out of the sixty-seven histories listed by Elliot for his first volume, only thirty-one had found a place in the Bibliographical Index. It is, however, undeniable that the success of the Bibliographical Index proved an extra incentive to Elliot's further researches. Moreover, it brought him in close touch with orientalists in Britain who helped him in his work. Thus, for instance, Duncan Forbes (1798-1868), who was then employed by the British Museum to catalogue Persian manuscripts in the museum, and W.H. Morley (1815-1860) supplied him information of works in the British Museum and other libraries of London.[2] All this led to the expansion of Elliot's four planned volumes into thirteen planned volumes.[3] From amongst his researches he lived to publish (Cape Town, 1853) only the Appendix to the Arab Historians of Sindh. Dying prematurely in December 1853, Elliot left

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[1] Arabs in Sind, the page preceding the table of contents.

[2] vide Elliot's correspondence with Duncan Forbes and Morley in the Add. MS. 30,789, ff. 26-35, 40-49. B.M.

[3] Elliot's revised plan prefixed to the Arabs in Sind.

behind him a huge collection of papers and oriental works.

The history of the extension of Elliot's original nominal index belies suggestions by some modern historians that academic purpose was minimal in his researches.[1] Furthermore Elliot's attitude towards his source material expresses a strong academic motivation. In the interest of scholarship Elliot considered it essential to bring out critical editions of Persian sources. While fully acknowledging the Bombay Press' work in lithographing Mir Khwanda's Rauzat-us-Safa, Elliot regretted that the work was not critically edited with full indication of the various readings in manuscripts.[2] He stressed the need of a new translation of the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri because he found that Major Price's translation was not based on an authentic copy.[3] This could mislead historians. The purpose of Elliot's giving in original the initial and concluding lines of histories undoubtedly was to ease the historian's task of identifying respective works.

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[1] See, for instance, Khaliq Ahmad Nizami's remarks on Elliot-Elliot and Dowson's History of India as told by its own Historians Vol. II, reprinted with (a) Introduction by Professor Mohamad Habib (b) Commentary by the late Prof. S.H. Hodiwala (c) Supplement by Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, Aligrah, 1952, pp. 763-64.

[2] Bibliographical Index, p.95.

[3] Elliot & Dowson, Vol. VI, p. 277; Add. MS. 30,769, f.17 B.M.

It has been usually assumed by modern historians that the historical method implicit in Elliot's work is the method of writing history from authorities, that is, acceptance of statements from 'authorities' as historical facts. This understanding of Elliot's conception of history is not a wholly accurate understanding of his attitude towards historical sources. Elliot emphasized the need of critical evaluation of evidence contained in Persian histories. His assessment of various Persian histories shows that he discounted the prejudices and interested motives of historians before accepting their testimony.[1] Moreover, it is evident throughout his work that he attached considerable importance to relating the works to their author's range of experience in assessing the strength of their evidence. Thus, for instance, while confronted with conflicting evidence on the commencement of the rule of the Sammas in Sind, Elliot rightly places more reliance on the contemporary evidence of Shams-i Siraj's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi than the provincial history of Sind, namely the later Tarikh-i-Tahiri.[2] Detailed biographical articles were undoubtedly given with a view to placing

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[1] See, for instance, Elliot's comments on the historians of Timur - Add. MS., 30768, ff. 111-12. See also Elliot & Dowson, III, pp. 478-79; Vol. VI, pp. 210, 400.

[2] Arabs in Sind, p. 194.

accurately the Indo-Persian historians' situation in life, and to detecting, if possible, their personal predilections and interested motives.

Misconception amongst modern historians of Elliot's concept of history owes partly to the assumption that Elliot himself was attempting a general history of India in the form of extracts from Indo-Persian historians. This erroneous assumption is to be partly attributed to Elliot's own assertion that he had extended his original plan 'so as to admit of its embracing not only a Bibliography of Historians, but a complete History of Muhammedan India.'[1] This statement of Elliot must be interpreted in the context of the gradual development of his work on Indo-Persian histories. As already shown, his initial aim was merely to list Persian works on Indo-Muslim history. Between 1847-49 he extended his nominal index to include critical notices of Indo-Persian histories together with biographical details of their authors and extracts from some of the more important works. After the publication of the Bibliographical Index in 1849, Elliot's work increasingly assumed a historical character as is evident both from its changed title and the materials he collected for it. The Bibliographical Index now became 'History of Muhammedan India'.[2] He extended the scope of

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[1] This is in his outline of his revised plan prefixed to the Arabs in Sind.

[2] Loc. cit.

the work to include translations - whole or in part - of most Indo-Persian histories he was to include in his work.

Nevertheless, Elliot was not himself attempting a general history of India in the form of extracts from Indo-Persian histories. That the magnum-opus that Dowson developed Elliot's pre 1857 materials into (Elliot & Dowson) was partly intended to fulfil the purpose of a general history is not to be denied. What modern historians have misunderstood or ignored is the fact that it was Dowson who imparted this purpose to Elliot's work.[1] Elliot himself regarded 'The History of India as told by its own Historians' in the form of lengthy passages from Indo-Persian histories, as the raw material from which European scholars might later write a history. If Elliot had not taken this view of the materials he was translating and publishing, he would not have pointed out inconsistencies, variations and contradictions to be found in the testimony of Indo-Persian historians of Muslim India. He hoped that historians using the raw material brought to light by his researches would resolve the inconsistencies pointed out by him. That it was Elliot's view is apparent from the fact that he himself attempted, in the form of a lengthy note,[2] to construct a coherent and cogent

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[1]This aspect of Elliot & Dowson will be discussed in the next chapter.

[2]Elliot & Dowson, II, pp. 434-478.

narrative of Mahmud's invasions of India from the varying accounts which had been translated for his work.

Elliot's attitude towards non-historical literature and archaeological researches reinforce our conclusion that his main concern in giving long passages from Persian histories was to collect materials and not to present a general history. He recommended the reprinting of several travel accounts so that they could be easily accessible to the student of history.[1] He not only valued others' numismatic researches, but himself collected coins to further those researches.[2] Furthermore, as may be inferred from his letters to H. Cope, the Secretary of the Archaeological Society of Delhi, Elliot encouraged and assisted archaeological studies.[3]

Thus from a certain angle of view Elliot's profile is the profile of the pure scholar. But there is another angle of view - that which reveals the profile of an East India Company official preoccupied with the contemporary political and administrative scene in India. For Elliot the history

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[1] Arabs in Sind, pp. 245-283.

[2] E. Thomas's article 'An Account of eight Kufic silver coins' is based on the collection made by Elliot during his march to Peshwar with the camp of the governor-general - JASB, Vol. XX (1851), p. 537.

[3] Add. MS., 30789 - Original letters addressed to Sir H.M. Elliot - ff. 52-53 (B.M.); MSS. Eur. D. 313, pp. 1-8 (IOL). See also, JASB, Vol. XVI (1847), p. 1080.

of medieval India under Muslim rule revealed a general historical 'truth' of supreme relevance to the formation of British policies in India in the eighteen-forties.

The 'truth' for Elliot was that the 'common people' of India during the period of Muslim domination were 'plunged into the lowest depths of wretchedness and despondency'.[1] Elliot painted in his Preface to the Bibliographical Index Muslim rule in medieval India in the darkest colour. With a few exceptions, he says, the Muslim rulers of India had never contemplated the 'happiness and comfort' of their subjects, who were mostly Hindu.[2] He stressed the despotic nature of Indo-Muslim rule and pointed out the 'injurious' influences it exercised on the nation at large. It has been rightly suggested that for Elliot, as for many of his contemporaries, India was essentially a Hindu land.[3] Muslim rulers subjected their Hindu subjects to great oppression and denied them religious freedom. They resorted to measures more intolerant than mere restrictions on Hindu festivities; they persecuted the Hindus most persistently. This, in Elliot's view, was evident from the 'temples razed', 'idols mutilated', 'forcible conversions and marriages', 'murders and massacres.'[4]

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p.xvii.'

[2] ibid, p.xxii.

[3] Grewal, British Historians, p. 171.

[4] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p.xvii.

Elliot found that Persian histories were inadequate for his 'true' picture of Muslim rule in India. He turned to contemporary Muhammedan kingdoms for drawing 'a parallel between ancient and modern times, under circumstances and relations nearly similar.'[1] He found kings 'even of our own creation, sunk in sloth and debauchery, and emulating the vices of a Caligula or a Commodus.'[2] He saw the fountains of justice 'corrupted', state revenues never collected without 'violence and outrage', villages burnt and their inhabitants mutilated.[3] He goes on to add,

> 'Had the authors, whom we are compelled to consult, pourtrayed (sic.) their Caesars with the fidelity of Suetonius, instead of the more congenial sycophancy of Paterculus, we should not, as now, have to extort from unwilling witnesses testimony to the truth of these assertions.'[4]

This Preface, written in 1849, and reproduced in the first volume of Dowson's edition of Elliot's materials The History of India as told by its own Historians published in 1867, has aroused much comment among twentieth century historians of medieval India. The preface was printed in 1867 under the description of 'The original Preface' (namely to the Bibliographical Index) without however it being specifically mentioned that it was the reproduction of the

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, pp. xv-xvi.
[2] ibid, p. xvi.
[3] Loc. cit.
[4] ibid, pp. xvi-xvii.

preface written by Elliot in either 1847 or 1848 for his Bibliographical Index. Professor K.M. Ashraf in 1960 jumped to the conclusion that the preface was clear proof not only of Elliot's researches having been politically motivated,but also of Elliot's participation in a British manoeuvre to 'divide and rule' between Muslims and non-Muslim in India after the events of 1857-58. Ashraf writes that the:

> 'phase of comparatively liberal views and intellectual curiosity .. came to an abrupt end when, after the experience of the 1857 rebellion, the British government took direct charge of Indian administration. The details of imperialist policy were now carefully worked out for various spheres of Indian political and cultural life and no less a person that Sir H.M. Elliot, the then Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, was entrusted with the task of applying it to the field of historical studies. It was with this clear objective, so boldly stated in his preface to the first volume, that Elliot began in 1867 the publication of his famous series of the 'Historians & History of India' which, curiously enough, still forms the basis of most of our writings on medieval Indian history ... On this occasion I am only interested in underlining the fact, that with the entry of foreign imperialism in the field of our politics and our cultural life, our historical studies ceased to be 'an intellectual gymnastic' and after 1857 were systematically subjected to wilful distortion.'1

Dr. Ashraf's views of Elliot's assumptions and purposes are fatally vitiated by a simple fact of chronology. Elliot died in Cape Town in 1853. If any charge of a divide and rule manoeuvre is to be against anyone it must be either against

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[1] Proceedings of the Indian History Congress held at Aligarh in 1960, Calcutta 1961, pp. 144-45.

Dowson or against the sponsors of the 'History of India as told by its own Historians' in 1867 or against Elliot himself in 1847-49. Indeed, the significance of Elliot's 'Preface' has to be sought for in the times of Bentinck, Auckland, Ellenborough, Hardinge and Dalhousie.

For a correct understanding of Elliot's attitude towards Indo-Muslim rule in India as reflected in his preface to the Bibliographical Index, we must distinguish between the two stages of its formation, that is, the stage before February 1847 and the stage after. A comparison between the preface to the 'Bibliographical Index' written in 1847 and the one published in 1849 reveals that between 1847-49 Elliot made some significant additions to his original preface. His observations on the contemporary Muhammadan kingdoms, which strengthened his gloomy picture of medieval Muslim rule in India, were later additions for which his experiences as the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India appear to have been directly responsible. His preface of 1847 is inextricably linked with his views on British rule in India and social progress in general.

How Elliot regarded British and Indian interests under British rule in India may be gleaned from certain editorial articles in the Meerut Universal Magazine and Elliot's other publications. The conclusion that the editorial

articles[1] reflect Elliot's views is based on the fact that Elliot, along with W.H. Torrens (1806-1852), was one of the chief founders and editors of the MUM which ran for three years from 1835 to 1837.[2] Elliot presumably wrote most of the editorial articles, since soon after the foundation of MUM in 1835 W.H. Torrens was transferred from Meerut[3]. Even if they are not directly from Elliot's pen, these articles may be taken fairly to represent Elliot's view-point. That the editors of the MUM shared views on contemporary problems in India is apparent not only from editorial remarks in the MUM, but also from an article written jointly by Elliot and Torrens on the subject of education in 1834.[4]

The way Elliot's outlook developed before 1847 may be seen from his attitude towards the issue of education which engrossed British rulers in India in the eighteen-thirties. It is apparent from the articles 'Education' and 'Speculative

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[1] These articles are distinguished by the use of 'we' for the author or authors - editor's note to the article 'On the registration of Mafee', MUM, II.

[2] Hume, J. A Selection from the Writings, Prose and Poetical of the late Henry W. Torrens with a Biographical Note, Calcutta, 1854, Preface, pp. v, xiii; MUM, I, Prospectus.

[3] Hume, J. op. cit., pp. xi, xiii.

[4] Polyglot Baby's Own Book, Meerut Calcutta, 1834. This article was written by Elliot and Torrens under the pseudonym of Bartolozzi Brown. This is mentioned on the title page of the booklet available in the British Museum.

Benevolence' in the MUM that the only real foundations for popular education in the eyes of Elliot was the material progress of the country.[1] Material progress in India could not be achieved by imparting a knowledge of literature and natural sciences to a minority of the Indian population. In fact, Elliot held that the 'diffusion of knowledge' and 'the march of intellect' had everywhere succeeded and not preceded 'the march of capital'.[2] He advocated ideas approaching a factory-conditioned psychology. In his view improvement in India was to be achieved, as it had been achieved in Britain[3], so he thought, by bringing about a revolution in the indolent and feckless habits of an ignorant population by force of law. Ignorance of the population was the ignorance of the fact that industry confers happiness.

Elliot regarded the growth of capital and furtherance of material prosperity as the main objective of British rule in India. In 1835 he lamented that the British rulers of India by their apathy to social irregularities which impeded progress, had never contemplated the happiness of the people placed under their trust.[4] It was so 'because their attention

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[1] 'Education', MUM, 1835, pp. 227-235; 'Speculative Benevolence', ibid, Vol. III, pp. 229-262.

[2] 'Education', ibid, Vol. I, p. 229; 'Speculative Benevolence', ibid, Vol. III, p. 262.

[3] 'Education' ibid, Vol. I, p. 232.

[4] ibid, p. 234.

Elliot regarded the British rulers of India to be far more enlightened than their predecessors. He asserts that

> 'we have already, within the half century of dominion, done more for the substantial benefit of the people, than our predecessors .. were able to accomplish in more than ten times that period.'[1]

He points out the achievements of the British government in the North-Western Provinces. Here

> 'in the very seat of their supremacy, we have hundreds of good district roads where none existed before; besides the 400 miles of trunk-road, .. to which the Emperors never had anything in the remotest degree to be compared.'[2]

The British rulers were equally concerned about constructing bridges and digging canals. Unlike their predecessors they did not waste water on the 'frivolities of fountains', but utilized it for fertilizing those areas 'which had been barren from times immemorial'.[3] For Elliot

> 'The scientific survey alone of the North-Western Provinces is sufficient to proclaim our superiority ... It altogether eclipses the boasted measurement of Akber, and is as magnificent a monument of civilization as any country in the world can produce.'[4]

Finally, Elliot reminded his readers that 'six centuries more have to elapse, before anything like a comparison can be fairly instituted.'[5]

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p. xxix.

[2] ibid, p. xxix, fn.

[3] ibid, p. xxix, fn.

[4] ibid, pp. xxix-xxx, fn.

[5] ibid, p. xxx, fn.

in the interests of both the rulers and the ruled, Elliot assessed the achievements of the Indo-Muslim rulers. He found that the Muslim rulers of India, with a few exceptions, had neglected his fundamental desiderata of a good government. In his view 'the comfort and happiness of the people were never contemplated' by the Muslim rulers of India.[1] They had ignored the works of public utility. Elliot mentions that the achievements of Firoz Shah, Ali Mardan Khan and Jahangir had been much exaggerated.[2] In fact, some of the boasts about the achievements of the Indo-Muslim rulers were without any foundations.[3] Many works purporting to further the material interests of society had been undertaken from motives of personal vanity or political expediency.[4]

It is apparent that Elliot's main charge against the Indo-Muslim rulers was not that they were despots, but that they were not enlightened despots. They did not take the long-term view that by seeking the prosperity of their subjects, they would better serve their own interests. That Elliot could not have held the despotism of the Muslim rulers against them follows also from his view that rule by 'the wisest and best' was the ideal form of government.[5]

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p.xxii.

[2] ibid, Preface, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

[3] ibid, Preface, p. xxiv.

[4] ibid, Preface, pp. xxii-xxiv.

[5] 'Cicero as a Philosopher', MUM, III, p.430. Authorship vide Sir R. Burns' 'Notes' on contributions and authors of the MUM, IV. (IOL. ST. 890).

could not be diverted from the collection of Revenues.'[1]

With the end of material advancement dominating his notions of progress, Elliot no doubt attached great importance to public measures which could facilitate material prosperity of the country. As agriculture was the mainstay of India, the nature of the survey of land, means of irrigation and transportation acquired great importance in Elliot's thinking on India. He praised the achievements of the company's government, especially in the North-Western Provinces, in building canals, bridges and roads.[2]

However, Elliot was not altruistic ultimately in his concern for the ruled. His was the outlook of an 'enlightened egoism', that is, by seeking to confer prosperity on the people of India, the British in India would confer prosperity upon themselves. Consideration for long-term British interests were behind his criticism of the government's preoccupation with augmenting revenues. 'Short-sighted has been their policy', so held Elliot - 'a people untrained to habits of industry, a nation daily retrograding in civilization, will not long be able to meet the demands made upon them for tribute.'[3]

Armed with this concept of how to achieve material progress

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[1] 'Education', MUM, Vol. I, p. 234.

[2] Bibliographical Index, p. xxix.

[3] 'Education', MUM, Vol. I, p. 234.

Elliot's unqualified praise in 1847-49 of British activities for the promotion of the welfare of Indian society may appear to be inconsistent with his earlier beliefs that the British government in India neglected the interest of Indian society. Far otherwise: his praises followed from his ideas on the purpose of British rule in India. As already discussed, in his concern for the interests of Indian Society Elliot was not altruistic ultimately. He gave primacy to British interests and upheld that in their Indian policy the British must be guided by their own interests. He was adverse to

> 'the false principle that has been brought into Indian legislation, viz., that India is primarily held in trust for the benefit of the black population.'[1]

Here Elliot was in disagreement with the liberal opinions of Macaulay and others.

Indeed, Elliot was consistently opposed to liberalism both at home and elsewhere. He was against municipal reforms in Britain;[2] he derided the Edinburgh Review; he was unfavourable to the abolition of slavery because it 'added to the misery of the proprietors.'[3] He regarded Turgot's liberalism as subversive of 'the positive law'. He invited his readers to consider whether the:

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[1] 'Speculative Benevolence', MUM, 1836, p. 262.

[2] ibid, Vol. II, pp. 247-48.

[3] ibid, p. 245 fn.

'first steps of the French Revolution do not find a just parallel in the proceedings now in progress through England and her colonies.'[1]

No wonder Elliot strongly opposed the liberal ideas which were diffused in Indian administration with Bentinck's arrival. The MUM characterized as 'mock philanthropy' the governor-generalship of Bentinck.[2] The editors of the MUM opposed India's 'new law-givers', 'the Macauleys and Cammerons.'[3] They belied the liberal assumptions that the British were the 'task-masters' in India and that they oppressed the Indian peasant and workers.[4] They insisted that the Indian peasant received a larger portion of the produce than the English labourer and that the Indian worker was better off than his counter-part in Britain.[5] They were wont 'to uphold patriotism against cosmopolitanism.'[6]

Imperialist and nationalist to his core, Elliot was anxious to disprove such liberal accusations as had been openly levied against British rule by the British India Society formed in 1839. The society was openly critical of the company's 'ruinous system of taxation, its failure to develop the resources of the country, its neglect of public

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[1] 'Speculative Benevolence', MUM, II (1836), p. 243.
[2] 'Education', ibid, I, p. 230.
[3] 'Speculative Benevolence', ibid, II, pp. 261-62.
[4] ibid, pp. 260-61.
[5] ibid, pp. 260-62.
[6] ibid, p. 261.

works.'[1] It drew attention to the 'poverty, misery and discontent' prevailing in India.[2] Against this background, Elliot was keen to show that British rule was beneficial and not harmful for the Indian people. His preface of 1847-49 was partly subservient to this purpose. A glowing picture of British achievements contrasted with the dark picture of Indo-Muslim rule could prove Elliot's point.

That in comparing the achievements of the British and Muslim rulers of India, Elliot's purpose was 'to prove' the superiority of British rule is clearly stated in his papers. He writes:

> 'It would be an interesting subject to compare the amount of revenue registered in Akber's time and our own. If we collect an equal amount it may be argued that they were both cash rents. What should be done is to prove from old histories or travels where procurable that certain spots which are now sheets of cultivation were then and afterwards barren jungles.. The result would be to prove that the land in cultivation on which our assessment is levied is three times as much as that cultivated in Akber's time - though the amount collected may nearly be the same.'[3]

Elliot was not content to point the material advantages accruing to the Indian people from British rule. He represented the British as the liberators of 'the long oppressed race' (Hindus) from 'the tyranny of its former masters.'[4]

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[1] Mehrotra, S.R. The Empergence of the Indian National Congress, Vikas Publications, 1971, p. 16.

[2] ibid, p. 16.

[3] Elliot Papers, MSS. Eur. F.57, p.110. IOL.

[4] Bibliographical Index, p.xix.

He contrasted 'the mild and equitable' rule of the British with the oppressive nature of the rule of their predecessors. He asserted that under British rule the Indians enjoyed 'the highest degree of personal liberty, and many more personal privileges that were ever conceded to a conquered nation.'[1]

With his views on the importance of material progress and of the strict enforcement of law, Elliot's emphasis on the virtue of personal liberty may appear enigmatic, particularly in the absence from his preface of any ideas suggesting a correlation between personal freedom and material progress. His observations on the subject were aimed at the 'bombastic' Bengali baboos against whom he has tiraded in his preface both in 1847 and 1849. Discontent amongst the 'Young Bengal' had raised fears of threat to British empire in India in the mind of Elliot.

In the eighteen-thirties and forties there was some political ferment amongst certain sections of the western-educated Indians in Bengal. This found expression in the formation of societies and debating clubs with avowedly social and political ends. Up to 1835 this discontent manifested itself in articles published in newspapers and public meetings, where resentment was expressed against discrimination between 'conquered' natives and 'more

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p.xxi.

favoured conquerors.' Also there was resentment against oppression.[1] After 1835 there was more concerted political activity. The resumption of rent-free lands and the threatened cancellation of the permanent settlement united a sizeable portion of the landed aristocracy in Bengal. The principal zamindars residing in and around Calcutta formed, with the assistance of non-official Anglo-Indians, in 1837-38 the Landholders Society 'to defend and promote the landed interests of the country.'[2] There was a mixed reaction of apprehension, concern and approval in the Indian press over the formation of the Landholders society which was seen as 'the first society for political objects which has ever been organized by the natives of India.'[3] In 1839 the society allied itself with the British India Society in England which had been formed to agitate Indian questions in England. The same year saw the formation of the Patriotic Association by a group of Eurasians and Indians.[4] This association, though of very short duration, stressed 'the disabilities, grievances and hardships' Indians suffered under British rule.[5]

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[1] Chattopadhyay, Goutam, Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century (Selected Documents), Calcutta 1965, Introduction, pp. xiii-xvi.

[2] Mehrotra, op. cit., p.8.

[3] ibid, pp. 1, 9-11.

[4] ibid, p. 26.

[5] ibid, p. 26.

The eighteen-forties witnessed sharper criticism of British rule by Young Bengal. In March 1838 some educated Bengalis had established in Calcutta a literary association called the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (SAGK). This association met regularly to discuss questions of general importance. In its meetings British rule came under shapr criticism. A paper read to the society in 1843 referred to the 'notoriously' and 'shamelessly corrupt' courts in the interior of the country and asserted that British had 'no sincere wish to bestow the benefits of a just judicial and police administration upon the people.'[1] This aroused great commotion in the press. The speech was characterized as 'treason' by Captain Richardson, Principal of the Hindu College, Calcutta.[2] Already in 1841 a society had been formed for the amelioration of India - the Deshahitaishini Sabha.[3] The main speaker of the society at the time of its formation had referred to the deprivation of political liberty to the Indian people since the commencement of British rule.[4] This 'deprivation of the enjoyment of

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[1]Chattopadhyay, Goutam, Awakening in Bengal, Calcutta 1965, pp. xli-xliii.

[2]ibid, p. xliii.

[3]ibid, p. xli; Mehrotra, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

[4]Chattopadhyay, op. cit., xli; Mehrotra, op. cit., pp. 26-28.

political liberty' said the speaker, 'is the cause of our misery and degradation. The loss of happiness follows the loss of civil liberty, as shadow does substance.'[1]

It was to show to the Young Bengal that they enjoyed far greater liberty under British rule that Elliot delineated in unmitigated terms the injurious influences of the despotic Muslim rule. It is significant that Elliot ascribes to despotism the wretched and miserable fate of the Hindus under Muslim rule. His charge of despotism against Muslim rulers does not follow from his ideas on social progress. It was brought in as a weapon against Bengali clamour that British rule had deprived Indians of their liberty. It is significant to point out that though the discontent and agitation in Bengal was confined to a tiny minority Elliot saw it as a potential threat to British supremacy in India. That he viewed the discontent in Bengal in the eighteen-thirties and forties as harbinger of serious threat to British rule in India is suggested by his remarks that Jacobins in France started as small clubs.[2]

Similarly, political considerations informed the second stage of the formation of Elliot's attitude towards Indo-Muslim rule. As already stated, in 1847-48 Elliot

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[1]Quoted, Mehrotra, op. cit., p.27.

[2]Speculative Benevolence', MUM, II, pp. 235, 239.

strengthened his dark picture of Muslim rule in India by incorporating in his original preface observations on contemporary Muhammedan kingdoms.

Elliot's professed aim in adverting to contemporary Muhammadan kingdoms was to throw light on the nature of Muslim rule as such. He had found the medieval Persian histories themselves deficient for a proper appreciation of the working of despotism under Muslim rulers in India. To quote him:

> 'In Indian Histories there is little which enables us to penetrate below the glittering surface, and observe the practical operation of a despotic Government and rigorous and sanguinary laws, or the effects upon the great body of the nation of these injurious influences.'[1]

However, in 1847-48, Elliot found that if

> 'we turn our eyes to the present Muhammedan Kingdoms of India, and examine the character of the princes, and the condition of the people subject to their sway, we may fairly draw a parallel between ancient and modern times, under circumstances and relations nearly similar.'[2]

Elliot's interest in the contemporary Muhammadan kingdoms was other from being merely academic interest in the workings of contemporary Muslim despotism taken up merely in order to understand the workings of past Muslim despotisms. His interest was politically motivated and in the sphere of practical politics, politics in which after

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[1] Bibliographical Index, Preface, p. xv.

[2] ibid, Preface, pp. xv-xvi.

February 1847 Elliot was personally involved. This politics related to East India Company's relationship with Awadh in which Elliot took a direct hand despite all his other preoccupations as foreign secretary (notably with the Panjab).

It is no coincidence that Elliot's interest in the contemporary Muhammadan kingdoms begins with his promotion to the foreign secretaryship. In fact, his new interest was directly aroused by his new official position which introduced him to very different facets of British rule in India to those with which he had been previously familiar. Upto February 1847 his activities were those of a revenue officer. But after February 1847 his duties largely consisted in conducting the day to day relations of the government with native kingdoms. In the first two years of his foreign secretaryship, the British government were preoccupied with the affairs of the Panjab. However, despite their preoccupation with the Panjab, Hardinge and Dalhousie's governments continued to meditate annexation of Awadh.

In November 1847 Hardinge personally visited Lucknow to bring to the ruler of Awadh's notice the possibility, indeed probability of the British government's interfering in the internal affairs of Awadh should the ruler fail in the British view to mend his ways within the next two years.[1]

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[1] Memorandum and a note of the conference attached to Hardinge's letter of 2nd December 1847 to the Court of Directors - Political Letters Received from India L/P & S/6/15(1847) pp. 511-42. IOL.

This warning was intended to be a prelude to annexing Awadh to company's empire in India. In December 1847 Hardinge wrote a long letter to the Court of Directors recommending the introduction of Company's rule over Awadh in the company's own interest as well as that of the people of Awadh but with a show of policy.[1] He was aware that the annexation of the kingdom of a 'faithful .. ally' would damage any British reputation amongst other native princes of India.[2] There was, therefore, need to let the world know that misrule was prevalent in Awadh and that the British were fully apprised of it. 'The necessity (of annexing Awadh) having been made manifest', so wrote Hardinge, 'it is in my estimation very unimportant, whether a temporary prejudice be raised against the government.'[3]

With Dalhousie's arrival the annexation of Awadh became even more seriously considered than before.[4] In September 1848 Dalhousie personally requested W.H. Sleeman (1788-1856) to accept the office of Resident of Lucknow 'with special reference to the great changes which, in all

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[1] Political Letters Received from India L/P & S/6/15 (1847) p. 524.

[2] ibid, pp. 528-29, 537.

[3] ibid, p. 537

[4] Tate, R.F.S. The Home Government of India, 1834-53, Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1972, pp. 296-97, 304-05.

probability will take place' in the 'great, rich and oppressed country.'[1] Sleeman was deputed to investigate the state of Awadh's administration. Even before he started his inquiry, Sleeman assumed the prevalence of 'gross maladministration, cruelty and injustice' in Awadh.'[2]

Elliot's harsh criticism of the vicious character of medieval and modern Muslim rulers of India, their tyranny and oppression is placed in its full historical context, when it is seen as written with the future of Awadh in mind. Elliot had ulterior motives in excoriating the Muslim rulers in India both in medieval times and in his own day. His comments on the rotten state of contemporary Muhammadan kingdom, comments which sharpened the tone of his criticism of Indo-Muslim rule, were intended to vindicate the East India Company's future course of action relating to Awadh. From his personal involvement as foreign secretary Elliot knew that there was a need to prepare public opinion for a future annexation of Awadh. It is significant that Elliot had accompanied Hardinge when the latter had gone to Lucknow to warn the nawab of the possibility of British interference in the affairs of the kingdom if the internal affairs of Awadh did not substantially improve in the following two

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[1] Sleeman, W.H. A Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850, London 1858, I, pp. xviii-xix.

[2] ibid, p. xix.

years.[1] It may be assumed that Elliot as the foreign secretary knew the contents of Hardinge's letter of 2nd December 1847 to the Court of Directors, the letter in which Hardinge had discussed at length the implications of annexing Awadh to the company's government. The basis of our assumption is that Hardinge's letter was not a secret letter and that it came from the foreign department and that the enclosures to the letter are signed by Elliot.[2] It is further to be remarked that since the governor-generals usually did not have a Member of Council for the Foreign Department in the Government, the practice was that the Governor-General transacted all business directly with the Foreign Secretary.[3] Hence, it may be presumed that Elliot knew the view-point of the Government of India on the subject of the annexation of Awadh.

It is significant in this context to point out that the Hobhouse Administration was in favour of a quick annexation of Awadh in 1846-47.[4] Elliot, who believed in the policy of consolidating the Company's Indian empire by a show

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[1] Note of the Conference attached to Hardinge's letter of 2nd December 1847 to the Court of Directors -Political Letters Received from India, L/P & S/6/15 (1947) IOL.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Hunter, W.W. The Marquess of Dalhousie (Rulers of India Series), Oxford 1890, p.35

[4] Tate, R.F.S. The Home Government of India, 1834-53. Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1972, pp. 296-97, 305.

of justice and policy,[1] would undoubtedly favour a cautious attitude towards further expansion of the empire without sufficiently preparing public opinion for it.

Elliot's last work to be published during his life-time, namely, the Arabs in Sind, epitomizes those academic urges and practical preoccupations which had so far characterized his Indo-Muslim studies. The Arabs in Sind which was intended to be an appendix to Volume III of Elliot's revised and enlarged plans discussed above, contains notices of varying length on the history, geography and ethnography of Sind. By far the greatest portion of the work is devoted to the Arab conquest of Sind. He has also given historical notices of individual dynasties such as the Sumeras, Sammas and the Arghuns, without, however, welding these notices into a coherent historical narrative. Considerable attention is devoted to historical geography of Sind.

Elliot's Arabs in Sind forms a distinctive land-mark in modern historiography on medieval Sind. Sprenger aptly remarked that 'this little volume contains a mass of the most valuable information and interesting historical parallels on a period on which it was not to be expected that so much light would ever be thrown.'[2] Elliot was the first historian

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[1] See our discussion above on Elliot's attitude towards the resumption of the rent-free grants.

[2] 'Manuscripts of the late Sir M. Elliot', JASB, Vol. XXIII (1854), p. 227.

to make an extensive use of several local histories and Arab traveller's account besides general Indo-Persian histories. He used the Tarikh-i-Sind, Chach Namah, Tuhfat-ul Kiram, Tarikh-i-Tahiri, Beglar Namah, Futuh al-Buldan, Khurdadbih, Masudi, Istakhri, Ibn Hauqal. The use of these works enabled Elliot not only to give a more accurate and a fuller account of Mir Kasim's activities in Sind than has hitherto been given, but also the subsequent history of the Arabs in Sind which had received only a passing notice from Elphinstone.[1] Furthermore, Elliot's source-material enabled him to make observations on religious conditions as well as subsequent political developments besides reconstructing with some success the ancient and medieval geography of Sind.

So far the Arabs in Sind presents Elliot as a scholar eager for knowledge and desirous of contributing to his field of study. However, Elliot the administrator with practical political preoccupations does not lag behind Elliot the scholar. He expatiates on the oppressive nature of Muslim rule in Sind for the Hindus. 'To the Hindus', so writes Elliot, 'the public tribunals were only the means of extortion and forcible conversions, as they had proved themselves to be to the very latest period of Muhammedan dominion in Sind.'[2]

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[1] History of India, 1843, I, p.518.

[2] Arabs in Sind, pp. 83-84.

He mentions several restrictions imposed by Muslim rulers on their subjects and concludes that 'there was, and could be, no sympathy between the conquerors and the conquered'.[1]

These observations which form part of Elliot's discussion of the Arab administration in Sind are based on the writings of travellers and politicians contemporaneous with Elliot himself.[2] The absence of scruple in Elliot's reliance on nineteenth-century travel and general accounts for the specific purpose of judicial administration in the eighth and ninth centuries becomes intelligible when studied against the remarks which follow Elliot's observations on the oppressive nature of Muslim rule in Sind. Elliot remarked:

> 'It is expedient that these matters should be often brought back to remembrance and pondered on; for the inhabitants of modern India, as well as our clamorous demagogues at home, are very apt to forget the depth of degradation from which the great mass of the people have been raised under the protection of British supremacy.'[3]

Elliot's premature death in December 1853 prevented him from organizing and consolidating the extensive materials he had collected for his magnum-opus. He left behind him a huge mass of papers consisting of translations - in part or whole - of oriental works, notes and essays on various subjects of interest. Lady Elliot took Elliot's papers to England

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[1] Arabs in Sind, p. 84.

[2] ibid, p. 84, fn.1.

[3] ibid, p. 84.

where, as the next chapter will describe, after several impediments Elliot's papers saw the light of the day when John Dowson undertook to complete Elliot's unfinished work.

Elliot and Dowson: History of India as told by its own Historians

Elliot's researches into Indo-Persian historical literature were consolidated and completed by John Dowson (1820-1881) in the form of the History of India as told by its own Historians which appeared in eight volumes between 1867 and 1877. The eight volumes of Elliot & Dowson appeared successively in the years 1867, 1869, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1875 and 1877.[1] It was, thus, twenty-four years after Elliot's death that his work was finally completed.

The circumstances under which Elliot's work was continued, completed, financed and published were very different from those under which, during his lifetime, he had first planned, undertaken and then extended his researches. First was the change of scene: it was in Britain and not in India that Elliot's work was finally completed. Second, as it was pointed out by Edward Thomas in the 'Preliminary Note' to the first volume of Elliot & Dowson, the work was given to a generation of readers different from that for which it had been intended.[2] Last but not the least, it was completed by a person who had no direct involvement with Indian public

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[1] Vols. VII & VIII both appeared in 1877.

[2] Elliot & Dowson, I, p.v.

affairs, had no personal knowledge and experience of India and whose primary field of study was and continued to be the non-Muslim period of Indian history. All these differences had great influence on the final shaping of Elliot & Dowson.

Modern historians of medieval India have so far ignored this aspect of Elliot and Dowson's monumental work. They have continued to interpret the significance of Elliot & Dowson in the light of Elliot's original preface written in 1847-49, which as shown in the previous chapter is embedded in the circumstances of Bentinck, Ellenborough, Hardinge and Dalhousie. What is even more important, modern historians in their assessment of Elliot & Dowson have been oblivious of Dowson's contribution to and influence in shaping Elliot & Dowson. It is, therefore, imperative that Elliot & Dowson be understood and analysed against the background of its changed perspective in eighteen-sixties and seventies.

The eventual publication and completion, even the arranging and editing of Elliot's posthumous papers, were fraught with difficulties. As noticed by Aloys Sprenger, who prepared a catalogue of Elliot's manuscripts after Elliot's death and also noticed the state of Elliot's papers,[1] Elliot's papers were very voluminous and in different degrees of

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[1] 'Manuscripts of the late Sir H. Elliot', JASB, Vol. XXIII (1854), pp. 225-63.

preparation for publication in 1854. Three volumes of the work were considered ready for the Press.[1] However, the greater portion was incomplete[2] For some volumes Elliot had collected materials which needed careful sifting and arranging, while for others translations had yet to be done and notes added.[3] Thus, for instance, for the reigns of Akbar and Aurangzib there were no translations.[4] Furthermore, there was the problem of securing financial assistance for such a voluminous work, a work which needed skilled attention but offered negligible commercial rewards. These circumstances render the story of how Elliot's papers were posthumously eventually brought to publication of great interest to the studentof medieval Indian history.

In the story of the eventual publication of Elliot's posthumous papers three questions demand detailed investigation and analysis. First, how the publication was financed. Second, the difficulties that arose in finding a suitable person in Britain for completing Elliot's researches. Third, the nature of Dowson's contribution, specifically his

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[1] Report on Elliot's papers by Wilson, Morley and Bayley - Board of Control Letters &C., F/2/3 (1856), enclosure to a letter of 19th March 1856. IOL.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Board of Control Letters &C., F/2/3 (1856), letter of 23rd July 1856; Public Home Correspondence, L/P & J/2/42, no. 7/106; Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2 Vols. 386, 404, 408, nos. 1435, 1471, 2354 respectively. IOL.

[4] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, Preface, p.v.

influence in determining the shape and content of Elliot & Dowson as it appeared between 1867 and 1877.

The publication of Elliot & Dowson was largely financed by the India House, London. The financial assistance by the India House was given in stages; for the first three volumes the India House sanctioned in 1856 a grant of £500 while the remaining five volumes were given £150 each as the work progressed.

Since some modern historians have alleged an intention to create a rift between Hindus and Muslims after the events of 1857-58 as the raison d'être of Elliot & Dowson it is important to ascertain the reasons which induced the India House to assist the publication the work.[1] This can be done best by giving a history of the grant from the extant official papers on the subject.

In October 1854, Lady Elliot, while still in India sought the patronage of the Court of Directors for the publication of the posthumous papers of her late husband.[2] Dalhousie and his council strongly seconded Lady Elliot's proposals on the grounds of the high literary value of Elliot's work. The

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[1] K.M. Ashraf's Presidential address to the medieval section of the Indian History Congress, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress held at Aligarh in 1960, Calcutta, 1961, pp. 144-45.

[2] See a copy of the Memorandum by Lady Elliot in Boards Collections, Vol. 2589 (1854-55), no. 155409. IOL.

publication of Elliot's papers, Dalhousie thought, would be 'an essential service to history and to literature.'[1] A member of Dalhousie's Council wrote, 'The learning and research displayed in them (Elliot's researches) reflect brilliancy in the whole Indian service'.[2]

However, the Court of Directors, without knowing exactly how far Elliot's researches had progressed, found it difficult to form 'any conclusive determination as to what course to be taken.'[3] They proposed to Lord Dalhousie that 'When Lady Elliott(sic) returns to England, and makes over to us the collections in her possession we shall be ready in communication with her to submit them to competent authorities and be guided by their report.'[4]

After Lady Elliot's arrival in England, the Court of Directors in conjunction with Lady Elliot appointed towards the end of 1855 a committee to ascertain 'what is ready for the Press, what it may be advisable to print and how far it may be practicable to complete the translations.'[5] The

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[1] 'Copy of the minute by Governor-General of India', ibid, pp. 7-8.

[2] ibid, pp. 7-8.

[3] Public Letters to Bengal, L/P & J/3, Vo. 36 (1855) No. 27 IOL.

[4] ibid, no. 27.

[5] General Correspondence: Miscellanies 1699-1858, E/1/303, letter no. 3637. IOL.

committee appointed to examine Elliot's papers consisted of W.H. Morley (1815-1860), E.C. Bayley (1821-1884)[1] - Lady Elliot's nominees - and H.H. Wilson, the nominee of the Court of Directors.[2] The committee submitted their report early in 1856 recommending the publication of the first three volumes at a cost of £500.[3] The preparation of the remaining volumes, the committee suggested, 'may be left for future consideration or until the printing of the first three volumes be nearly completed.'[4]

Following the recommendation of the committee the Court of Directors decided in March 1856 to sanction, subject to the approval of the Board of Control, a grant of £500 for the publication of the first three volumes of Elliot's work.[5] However, the Board of Control opposed the Court of Directors' decision. A member of the Board considered it 'ridiculous to publish work which no body reads.'[6] The

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[1] E.C. Bayley went to India in 1842; in 1849 he was the Under-Secretary in the Foreign Department; Home Secretary to the Government of India from 1862-1872; member of the Supreme Council from 1873-78; knighted in 1877. An orientalist of repute - Buckland, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

[2] General Correspondence: Miscellanies 1699-1858, E/1/303, letter no. 5021 - dated 13th December 1855.

[3] A copy of the report of Wilson, Morley and Bayley - Board of Control Letters &C., F/2/2 (1856), enclosure to a letter of 19th March 1856.

[4] Loc. cit.

[5] Court Minutes, B/231, pp. 1244-46. IOL.

[6] Board of Control Letters &C., F/2/3, notes attached to the draft letter of 17th May 1856.

Board of Control disapproved of the decision of the Court of Directors and wrote to the Court of Directors that 'However valuable the manuscripts may be in a literary sense the Board are not satisfied that the object is one calling for the expenditure of public money upon it and they do not feel at liberty to sanction the proposed expenses.'[1] The Board suggested that the completion of Elliot's work might 'more properly be left to the private subscription of those interested in such a work.'[2] It may be mentioned here that the Court of Director's decision to finance the first three volumes of Elliot's work had been strongly opposed by Sir James Melvill (1792-1861), the Chief Secretary of the India Office, too. In May 1856 he wrote a strong note opposing the Directors' decision. To quote him,

> 'However, valuable the work may be as a literary curiosity it is submitted to be very doubtful whether the Court would be justified in so large an outlay upon a work relating to a past period of history and not having a practical bearing upon the present welfare or administration of the Indian Territories.. It need hardly be observed that the present condition of the Indian Finances forbids any expenditure that is not absolutely requisite for the carrying on of the public services.'[3]

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[1] This is a draft reply to the letter of the Court of Directors of 22nd March 1856 - Board of Control, Letter &C., F/2/3, 17th May, 1856, IOL.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Board of Control Letters &C 1840-1858 Miscellaneous, F/2/18, May 1856, IOL.

However, the Court of Directors ultimately prevailed upon the Board of Control to sanction, albeit reluctantly, in July 1856 a grant of £500 for the publication of the first three volumes of Elliot's work on Indo-Persian historical literature.[1] The Court had urged upon the Board of Control the literary merits of Elliot's work and the peculiar circumstances which had enabled Elliot to gather so much material.[2] They mentioned that it was only through the official influence of his position that Elliot had been able to obtain access to several libraries not open to public.[3] Thus, 'the information obtained is such as no other individual could have procured, and the means resorted to and the labour bestowed in its arrangement were such as to give it (Elliot's work) a peculiar value in every respect.'[4] Moreover, the Court of Directors impressed upon the Board of Control that Elliot's researches had been carried with the knowledge and approval of the Government of India who had given him assurance of financial assistance for eventual publication of his work.[5]

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[1] *vide* Board of Control's letter of 23rd July 1856, Board of Control, Letters &C., F/2/3 (1956) IOL.

[2] Court of Directors' letter of 18th June 1856 to the Board of Control, *ibid*, June-July, 1856.

[3] *Loc. cit.*

[4] *Loc. cit.*

[5] *Loc. cit.*'

The Court of Directors keenness to patronize Elliot's work was most certainly due in part to their regard for Lady Elliot's position. It is significant that the Court of Directors should mention in their letter to the Board of Control that it would not 'consist with her (Lady Elliot's) position to require her to circulate a prospectus and seek subscriptions' if Elliot's work were to be published privately.[1] Moreover, it is very likely that the Elliot family had personal contact with some directors. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1820s the Elliots had known at least two directors for a long time. It is, therefore, very probable that personal considerations played their role in the decision of the Court of Directors to finance the publication of Elliot's posthumous papers. Our view is strengthened by the fact that only a few years earlier - in the years 1848-1851 - the Court of Directors had evinced reluctance on financial grounds to sanction the project of Sprenger's researches in the libraries of Lucknow - a work very similar to that of Elliot.[2]

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[1] Court of Director's letter of 18th June 1856. Board of Control, Letters &C, F/2/3 (1856) IOL.

[2] See correspondence between the Court of Directors and Lord Dalhousie - Abstract Political Letters L/P & S/6/5 (1847-55), no. 14, p. 905; Board's Collections, Vol. 2329, no. 121756, letter of 17th jJanuary 1849; India Political Letters Received, L/P & S/6/17, no. 22, pp. 115-116, Dalhousie's letter of 15th March, 1849.

The grant sanctioned in 1856 was claimed only in 1864 when a moiety was advanced to meet the expenses of publishing the first three volumes.[1] It may be pointed out that in 1864 and afterwards, it was Edward Thomas who corresponded with the India House on behalf of Lady Elliot. The remaining moiety was claimed by Edward Thomas in May 1869 when two of the first three volumes had already been published and the third was in progress.[2] In June 1871 Edward Thomas sought further financial assistance to the extent of £150 per volume for the next three volumes of Elliot & Dowson.[3] In his letter to the Under Secretary of State for India, Thomas pointed out that the Messrs. Trübners, the publishers of Elliot & Dowson, were reluctant to continue the publication of Elliot & Dowson without some state assistance as the work was not a profitable commercial venture for them.[4] In partial compliance with Thomas's request the India House sanctioned a grant of £150 for the fourth volume.[5] However, the India House remained non-commital about the

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[1] Public Home Correspondence, L/P & J/2/42, no. 7/106. IOL.
[2] ibid, no. 7/106.
[3] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/386, no. 1435, IOL.
[4] ibid, no. 1435.
[5] ibid, no. 1435.

future of volumes V and VI.

It is important to note that the sanction by the India House of £150 for the fourth volume of Elliot & Dowson was affected by considerable difference of opinion amongst the members of the Library Committee of the India House - as may be seen from the Minute Paper on the subject. Sir Erskine Perry (1806-1882) doubted 'whether the Mahomedan historians are of sufficient value to call for additional patronage'. Hence, he 'would not recommend any further outlay'.[1] However, Sir Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895), himself an oriental scholar, argued in favour of further assistance for the publication of Elliot & Dowson. He stressed that 'the work will certainly be of great value to India.'[2] No doubt the opinion of R. Rost, the librarian to the India House, that Elliot & Dowson 'have been received with unqualified praise both in India and Europe' had some weight with the final decision of the Finance Committee to comply with Thomas's request of a further grant.[3]

In June 1872 Thomas sought similar assistance for volume V as had been extended to volume IV of Elliot & Dowson.[4] The Library Committee acceded to Thomas's request but 'on the

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[1] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/386, no. 1435, Minute Paper. IOL.

[2] ibid, no. 1435, Minute Papers.

[3] ibid, no. 1435, 'Librarian's Observations.'

[4] ibid, vol. 404, no. 1471.

distinct understanding that that volume (V) will complete the work.'[1] Thomas, however, in his letter of 17th September 1872 urged upon the Under Secretary of State for India that abrupt ending of Elliot & Dowson with volume V would greatly jeopardise the usefulness of the work.[2] He supported the arguments for not ending the work after volume V with a letter from John Dowson who referred to 'the detriment that would ensue from such a course of action.'[3] In Dowson's own words 'To curtail this portion of the work would be to mutilate its most important feature and to greatly mar the value and repute of the whole'.[4] It may be remarked that volumes I-IV had covered the period upto the Mughal empire. Dowson, therefore, justifiably emphasized that the importance and extent of the remaining materials for the Mughal period were such that these materials could not possibly be compressed in one volume.[5] Furthermore, both Thomas and Dowson pointed out the inexpediency of cutting down the work at a point where it 'brings us into more direct contact with the annals of our own time'.[6]

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[1] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/404,no.1471,IOL.

[2] ibid, vol. 408, no. 2354.

[3] ibid, no. 2354, Thomas's letter of 17th September 1872.

[4] Dowson's letter of 13th August, 1872, addressed to Edwards Thomas, ibid, no. 2354.

[5] Loc. cit.

[6] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/408, no. 2354. Thomas's letter of 17th Sept. 1872.

These considerations induced the secretary of State for India In Council in November 1872 'not to refuse to sanction' a grant of £150 for the sixth volume, 'which the Duke of Argyll hopes will finish the Moghul series'.[1] However, the Minute Paper on the subject of extension of financial assistance to Elliot & Dowson suggests that in November 1872 the India Council had decided to finance the remaining two volumes as well.[2]

It appears that Edward Thomas exerted some personal influence in securing the extension of the grant to the last three volumes of Elliot & Dowson. There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that he had direct or indirect links with the India House. When in 1864 he claimed the grant sanctioned in 1856, he did not mention the name of the new editor of Elliot's papers in his letter to the India Office.[3] However, the Minute Papers giving the history of the grant mentions the name of the new editor .[4] Presumably some body on the

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[1] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/408 no. 2354.

[2] ibid, no. 2354. It is remarked in the Minute Paper 'I do not see any necessity for pledging ourselves at once to the expense of 3 new volumes. We may sanction a sixth volume with the expectation of a hope that this will finish the Mughal series - and to leave any further support to be continued hereafter.'

[3] Public Department Home Correspondence, L/P and J/2/42, no. 7/106. Thomas's letter of 25th July 1864 to the Under Secretary of State for India.

[4] ibid, Minute Paper.

India Council was in direct link with those intimately involved in publishing Elliot's papers. In 1871 and 1872 when the grant was further extended Henry T. Prinsep (1792-1878), whom Thomas had known since the eighteen-forties, was a member of the India Council.[1] Furthermore, Thomas and Dowson had contact with Sir Henry Rawlinson, of whose library Dowson made use for Elliot & Dowson and who was a prominent member of the Royal Asiatic Society. Rawlinson, who wrote extensively for the JRAS, was the director of the Royal Asiatic Society from 1862 to 1895.[2] The meetings of the Royal Asiatic Society undoubtedly offered opportunities to Thomas and Dowson of discussing personally with Rawlinson, and perhaps with other members of the India Council, the questions pertaining to the publication of Elliot & Dowson.

The conclusion must be then that the financial assistance given by the India office to the publication of Elliot & Dowson whether in regard to the original sanction of £500 in 1856 or the later extension of the grant in 1871-72 was not politically motivated. It was the efforts of Elliot's friends, notably Edward Thomas, and of other orientalists that secured the monumentous work of Elliot and Dowson financial assistance from the India Office.

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[1] In 1846 H.T. Prinsep had translated some Arabic extracts for Thomas's article 'On the Coins of the Dynasty of the Hindu Kings', JRAS, Vol. IX, p.194 fn.3.

[2] Buckland, Dictionary of Indian Biography, p. 352. For Dowson's use of Rawlinson's library see Elliot & Dowson, II, p.16.

With financial assistance secured, the feasibility of publishing the results of Elliot's researches depended on finding a suitable redactor. As already mentioned, the editing of the posthumous papers of Elliot required skill and attention. It needed a knowledge of Arabic, Persian, Hindustani and of Indian history. In 1856 when the India Office sanctioned the original grant of £500, W.H. Morley, who had been one of the committee set up to report on the papers of Elliot, undertook to edit Elliot's posthumous papers.[1] W.H. Morley was preeminently qualified for the undertaking. He had a good knowledge of Arabic and Persian. In 1848 he had edited a part of Mir Khwand's Raudat al-Safa.[2] In 1854 he had published a catalogue of the Arabic and Persian historical manuscripts in the Royal Asiatic Society.[3]

Although, as Edward Thomas was later to notice, W.H. Morley 'entered upon his task (of editing Elliot's papers) with full alacrity and zeal, his devotion soon slackened.'[4] Consequently, on Morley's premature death in 1860, the Elliot manuscripts were found to have made hardly any progress. [5]

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, I, Edward Thomas's Preliminary Note, ppv-vi.

[2] The History of the Atabeks of Syria and Persia by Mirkhond now first edited by W.H. Morley, London, 1848 (Society for the Publication of Oriential Texts).

[3] A descriptive Catalogue of the historical manuscripts in the Arabic and Persian languages preserved in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London, 1854.

[4] Elliot & Dowson, I, Preliminary Note, p.vi

[5] Loc. cit.

In Thomas's words 'when the MSS. were returned,. they were found to be in such an imperfectly advanced state as effectually to discourage any hasty selection of a new editor.'[1]

The fact that Morley did not make any substantial progress in preparing Elliot's researches for publication is significant for the subsequent selection of John Dowson in his place. In the late eighteen-fifties Morley was undoubtedly preoccupied with bringing out a critical edition of the Tarikh-i Baihaqi which was posthumously published in 1862 in the Bibliotheca Indica Series. Morley's preoccupation with his own studies presumably left him little time for editing Elliot's work which was such as to demand full-time attention.

The fate of the Elliot Papers at Morley's hands undoubtedly impressed upon Lady Elliot and her advisers, notably Thomas, the necessity of entrusting the preparation of Elliot's posthumous papers for publication to a scholar of less repute who had no work of his own in hand. This seems to have been the main reason why Dowson was selected in 1865 to edit Elliot's papers. In this respect the fact that a person whose primary field of interest was not medieval Indian history is very suggestive. It should be mentioned

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, I, Preliminary Note, p.vi.

however that before Dowson undertook the work, E.B. Cowell (1826-1903)[1] had undertaken in 1864 to edit Elliot's papers.[2] The reasons why Cowell accepted but did nothing are not known. It is possible that an examination of Elliot's papers soon revealed to Cowell that the work would be consuming of time he did not want to afford.

John Dowson's selection for the editorial work appears to have been primarily due to E. Thomas; the latter had known Dowson since 1863 at least. In that year we find Thomas assisting Dowson in the latter's reading of a Bactrian Pali inscription.[3] After Morley's neglect of Elliot's work and of Cowell's change of mind, Dowson appeared ideally suited for editing Elliot's papers even though Dowson's primary interest hitherto had been in ancient Indian history. The paleaology of ancient India had been Dowson's chief interest and of late he had contributed occasional

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[1] Cowell was Professor of History and Political Economy at the Presidency College, Calcutta from 1856 to 1858; from 1858 to 1864 he was the Principal of the Sanskrit College, Calcutta. He returned to Britain in 1864 to become in 1867 the Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge. His numerous publications included works on Persian poetry, Hindu Drama, Prakrit grammer - Buckland, Dictionary of Indian Biography, p. 98.

[2] Add. Cowell, E. 6377, no. 442, Edward Thomas's letter to Cowell. The letter is undated, but on circumstantial evidence it is to be ascribed to 1867 (Cambridge University Library); Public Department Home Correspondence, L/P & J/2/42, no. 7/106, Thomas's letter of 3rd August 1864.

[3] Dowson, J. 'On a newly discovered Bactrian Pali Inscription; and on other Inscriptions in the Bactrian Pali Character', JRAS, Vol. XX (1863), p. 268 & passim.

articles to the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.[1] Despite his few published works his reputation as a sound scholar had been established by his contribution to the study of Pali Bactrian inscriptions. He had discovered the system of Pali Bactrian numerals. Edward Thomas in his article on Bactrian coins referred to Dowson's 'mastering the inscription on a steatite funeral vase.'[2] Indeed, Thomas was personally aware of Dowson's merits through close co-operation in Dowson's decipherment of the newly discovered Bactrian Pali inscription which led to the discovery of the Bactrian Pali numerals.[3] In addition Dowson had the necessary linguistic knowledge for completing Elliot's work.

However, Dowson had strong reasons other than personal relationship with Thomas for undertaking the work of editing Elliot's papers for publication. It could not be said that these were entirely intellectual. From the chronology of his

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[1] Dowson, J. 'On a newly discovered Bactrian Pali Inscription; and on other Inscriptions in the Bactrian Pali character', JRAS, Vol. XX (1863), pp. 221-68; 'Letter on the Taxila Inscription', JASB, 1863, pp. 421-429, 'Translations of three copper plate inscriptions of the fourth century A.D., and Notices of the Chalukya and Gujjara Dynasties,' JRAS, Vol. I (N.S.) 1865, pp. 247-86. The paper was read on March 21, 1864.

[2] Thomas, E. 'Bactrian Coins', JRAS, 1863, p. 108, fn.1.

[3] Dowson, J. 'On a newly discovered Bactrian Pali Inscription; and on other Inscriptions in the Bactrian Pali Character', JRAS, 1863, p. 268 and passim.

activities indeed, it would seem that his purely intellectual interests would have led him away from Indo-Muslim studies.

Born at Uxbridge in 1820, John Dowson had come to London at the age of sixteen to be an assistant to his uncle Edwin Norris (1795-1872), who was then the assistant Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.[1] It seems that Dowson came from a poor family and did not have the advantage of any formal education. In this connection it is important to note that the writer/ writers of his biographical sketches specifically adverted to Dowson's being a 'self-made' and 'self-taught' scholar and also a 'self-made man'.[2]

Coming to London in 1837, Dowson assisted his uncle Edwin Norris for some years in Norris's work at the Royal Asiatic Society. It was Dowson's association with Edwin Norris which 'definitely marked out' his career as an orientalist.[3] In 1837 Edwin Norris had resigned his clerkship in the London offices of the East India Company to become assistant secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society.[4]. For

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[1] Obituary notices of Dowson in the JRAS, 1882, Annual Report, p. iv and The Academy, July-December 1881, p. 203. See also The DNB, 1888, Stanley-Lane Poole's article on Dowson.

[2] DNB, Vol. XV; JRAS, 1882, Annual Report, p. xv.

[3] The Academy, July-December, 1881, p. 203.

[4] DNB, Vol. XLI, 1895, p. 119.

several years he edited the Society's 'Journal' and conducted a large correspondence with oriental scholars at home and abroad.[1] A linguist and an Assyriologist, Norris was one of the earliest decipherers of cuneiform inscriptions.[2] It was Edwin Norris who induced Dowson to take up the study of oriental languages.[3] Dowson learnt Pali, Sanskrit, Telugu, Persian and Urdu. In learning Pali and Sanskrit Dowson undoubtedly followed after Norris who had discovered in 1846 the Bactrian Pali alphabet after deciphering the rock inscription of Ashoka, near Kapur di Giri.[4] Dowson himself had taken a keen interest in Norris's researches in 1846,[5]

Dowsons's interest in Persian and Urdu was not academic as it was with Sanskrit and Pali. His literary interests had been and were centred on non-Muhammadan studies for which Persian and Urdu were not essential. Of his nine articles published in various volumes of the JRAS only one is related to Persian studies. In learning Persian and Urdu Dowson was most probably influenced by careerist considerations.

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[1] DNB, Vol. XLI, 1895, p.119.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] JRAS, 1882, Annual Report, obituary notice of Dowson, p.xiv.

[4] E. Norris, 'On the Kapur-di-Giri Rock Inscription.' JRAS, 1846, pp. 303-307.

[5] ibid, p. 303; also Dowson's article on 'Indian Inscriptions', Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1881 (9th ed.) main article 'Inscriptions', p. 118;

A knowledge of these languages in the absence of a formal education of any kind could provide professional openings to Dowson. Indeed, he adopted the teaching of Urdu as his profession. In 1855 on the establishment of a chair in Hindustani he was appointed Professor of Hindustani in the University College, London.[1] The college had decided to introduce courses of study for the examination of the civil and medical services of the East India Company.[2] Simultaneously he became Professor of Oriental languages at the Staff College, Sandhurst then just opened.[3] He gave up his appointment at the University College in 1859 but held the professorship at Sandhurst until 1877.[4] His teaching duties prompted the publication of his Grammar of the Urdu or Hindustani Language in 1862. Similarly, his translation of a part of the Ikhwanu-s Safa in 1869 was undertaken for pedagogic reasons.[5]

Despite the nature of his professional duties Dowson did

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[1] University College, London, Proceedings at the Annual General Meeting of the members of the College, 28th February 1855, also that of 27th February 1856, pp. 8-9 and 8 respectively.

[2] Loc.cit. See also, Bellot, H.H. University College, London, 1826-1926, London 1929, pp. 264-66.

[3] JRAS, 1882, Annual Report, pp. xiv-v.

[4] Loc. cit. The University College, London, Calendar for the Session of 1859-60.

[5] Ikhwanu-s Safa or Brothers of Purity, translated from the Hindustani by Professor John Dowson, London 1869, translator's preface, p. v.

not have any special academic interest in the subject of Elliot's researches, namely medieval Indian history. It is significant that while he was engaged on Elliot & Dowson Dowson continued to give attention to ancient Indian paleography. In 1870 he translated a Bactrian Pali inscription.[1] In 1871 he wrote an article on ancient inscriptions from Mathura.[2] In 1875 and 1877 he wrote two more articles on Bactrian inscriptions and related subjects.[3] Indeed, the academic world regarded Indian paleography as Dowson's speciality.[4] He contributed to the ninth edition of the Encylopaedia Britannica the article on Indian paleography.[5]

Not only did medieval Indian history have no special attraction for Dowson when he undertook to edit Elliot's papers, but it never did even in his later life. After completing Elliot & Dowson in 1877 he undertook to continue the work at the desire of orientalists in Britain by covering the history of regional Muhammadan dynasties. For this purpose

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[1] 'Translation of a Bactrian Pali Inscription', JRAS, Vol. 4 (N.S.), 1870, pp. 497-502.

[2] 'Ancient Inscriptions from Mathura', JRAS, Vol. 5 (N.S.) 1971, pp. 182-96.

[3] 'Notes on a Bactrian Pali Inscription and the Samvat Era', JRAS, Vol 7 (N.S.) 1875, pp. 376-83; 'Further Note on Bactrian Pali Inscription and the Samvat Era', ibid, 1877, pp. 144-46.

[4] JRAS, 1882, Annual Report, obituary notice of Dowson, p.xiv.

[5] Dowson's article is to be found under the main article 'Inscriptions'.

he undertook a complete translation of the Mirat-i-Sikandari which he thought would cover the history of Gujrat.[1] But, Dowson's first complete and independent work, after a continuous involvement of twelve years with medieval Indian history, was on a subject far removed from Indo-Muslim history. He published in 1879 A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature.

As his interest in the subject matter of Elliot's researches thus appeared to have been minimal why was Dowson induced to accept the editing of Elliot's papers? Perhaps he undertook the work in part out of his supposedly characteristic generosity 'to place all the results of his learning at the service of any one who asked his assistance.'[2] But, his earlier literary activity rather indicates that literary ambition played a significant role in Dowson's decision to take up Elliot's unfinished work. He had contributed

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[1] It may be pointed out that Dowson died before completing the work, which was then continued by Sir E.C. Bayley - Bayley, E.C. The Local Muhammadan Dynasties: Gujrat (forming a sequel to Sir H.M. Elliot's History of the Muhammaden Empire of India), partially based on a translation by the late Professor John Dowson, London 1886, Preface, pp. v-vi.

[2] The obituary notice of Dowson in The Academy, July-December, 1881, p. 204. The writer mentions that 'even in his professional capacity his teaching was often given without thought of reward.'

desultorily to the JRAS articles on unconnected themes probably with a desire of finding a suitable field of study for himself.[1] In 1860s he had come to concentrate on paleography. As already seen his success in deciphering Bactrian inscriptions and thereby discovering the system of Bactrian numerals in 1863 firmly established his interest in paleography, particularly Bactrian. However, with several other scholars working on the subject - E. Thomas was one of them - Indian paleography could not have offered much scope for gaining a distinctive literary reputation. On the contrary, the editing of Elliot's papers, with the nature, importance and sphere of the subject defined, offered Dowson the opportunity which he seems to have been looking for. It is significant that he undertook Elliot's work in the belief that it would not require much time and study. It was thought that 'an Editor would have little beyond selecting extracts for publication and revising them for the Press.'[2]

Dowson was soon to realise that he had 'unwittingly undertaken the editing of a complete History out of very

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[1] Relevant articles are 'On the Geographical Limits, History, and Chronology of the Chera Kingdom of Ancient India', JRAS, Vol. VIII (1846), pp. 1-29; 'Route from Kashmir, via Ladakh, to Yarkand, by Ahmed Shah Nakshahbandi, translated from the Persian MS.' ibid, 1850, pp. 372-85.

[2] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, Preface, p. v.

incomplete materials.[1] Seemingly 'superabundant' materials were, in fact, very deficient for a complete history of medieval India. As already mentioned, there were no translations - part or full- for the reigns of Akbar and Aurangzib. Translations of certain important works were either in a very imperfect condition or else not forthcoming when required. Thus, for instance, Dowson discovered that the translation of Shams-i Siraj Afif's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi was so incomplete and inaccurate as to necessitate a fresh translation by the editor himself.[2] Elliot had entrusted a translation of Barani's Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi to a friend in India. Dowson's enquiries on the fate of that commission were fruitless and he was forced to translate the complete work himself.[3]

Under these circumstances, Dowson had to decide 'whether to make the best of the matter provided, or to fill up the blanks and finish the work by my own unassisted labours.'[4] He would have been very hesitant, he said, to have undertaken the task, 'had this prospect been presented to me at first' because 'I should not only have distrusted

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, Preface, p.v.

[2] Elliot & Dowson, III, Preface, p. vi.

[3] Ibid., pp. vi-vii.

[4] Ibid., VIII, pp. v-vi.

my ability, but have felt that the time and labour required were greater than I could bestow.'[1] But since Dowson had 'put .. (his) hand to the plough', and had unwittingly promised the publication of a complete history, he resolved that the work 'should be as perfect as my labour and ability could make it.'[2] One of the considerations which induced Dowson to 'complete' rather than merely to edit the Papers was the fact that the grant had already been sanctioned by the India House and the work had long been advertised as the 'History of India as told by its own Historians' and not as 'Series of Selections from the Papers of Sir H.M. Elliot'.[3]

The completion of Elliot's work involved much more than mere filling in of gaps. Nearly thirteen years had elapsed since Elliot had collected his materials. In the interval between Elliot's collection of materials and their editing there had been a considerable advance in the knowledge both of the history of medieval India and the historical literature for such a history, for example, Erskine's House of Taimur, Morley and Rieu's catalogues of oriental manuscripts in the libraries of the Royal Asiatic Society and the British

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, Preface, p.vi.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] ibid, p.v.

Museum, the Bibliotheca Indica editions of historical works. Thus, besides filling gaps in Elliot's papers, Dowson had to bring Elliot's researches up-to-date.

To describe accurately Dowson's contribution to Elliot & Dowson, the title of the work was slightly, but significantly changed in 1872 when the fourth volume was published. Up to the third volume the title had been 'The History of India told by its own Historians, The Muhammadan Period - edited from the Posthumous Papers of the late Sir H.M. Elliot, K.C.B. by Professor John Dowson, (my italics). In 1872 it was changed to '.. The Muhammadan Period - The Posthumous Papers of the Late Sir H.M. Elliot, K.C.B., edited and continued by Professor John Dowson'. (My italics). This change, Dowson noticed in the Preface of Volume IV was made 'to make it more accurately descriptive of the altered position of the Editor, who has had to take a larger share of actual authorship than was at first contemplated.'[1]

Dowson's contemporaries fully appreciated his contribution to the completion of Elliot's undertaking. A reviewer of the first volume of Elliot & Dowson wrote that 'it is only fair to Prof. Dowson to say that he is no common labourer, but a wise builder, who has hewn, shaped and

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, IV, Preface, p.x.

arranged the materials submitted to him in a way most creditable to himself and profitable to his readers.'[1] The reviewer in the Englishman of the third volume of Elliot & Dowson stated, 'we owe this volume quite as much to his labours as to those of the late Sir H.M. Elliot.'[2] The Royal Asiatic Society in its Annual Report in 1874 referred to Dowson's able editorship of Elliot's papers.[3] It is significant that the extension of the grant in 1871 by the India House was conditional upon Dowson continuing as editor.

As Dowson completed nearly half of Elliot & Dowson and substantially revised the other half, his ideas, assumptions and attitudes naturally played an important role in moulding the work. Any analysis of Elliot & Dowson without understanding Dowson's conception of history, therefore, must be inadequate, Before, however, discussing his ideas on history let us review the contents of Elliot & Dowson.

Elliot & Dowson was published in eight volumes between 1867 and 1877. The work covers in eight volumes the history of India from the Arab conquest of Sind in the eight century to the beginning of the nineteenth century when the British acquired ascendency over Delhi. Elliot and Dowson have

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[1] The Athenaeum, July-December 1867, p. 462

[2] Englishman, September 21, 1871, p.2.

[3] JRAS, pp. vi-vii.

achieved this not by writing a history of India themselves, but by giving extracts from the writings of historians in Persian. Volume one, however, contains translations from some Arabic works as well.

Volume one of Elliot & Dowson is devoted exclusively to Sind. It covers the period from the Arab conquest of Sind in the Eighth century to the end of the sixteenth when Sind was conquered by Akbar. In Dowson's words 'the isolation of the country and the individuality of its history require that all relating to it should be kept together.'[1] Historical extracts are given exclusively from the provincial histories of Sind. Elliot's Arabs In Sind, with some additions on geographical portion by Dowson, is given in the form of Appendix at the end of the volume.

Volumes II-IV of Elliot and Dowson's work deal chiefly with the history of pre-Mughal rulers of India. They include a portion of the Tuzuk-i-Baburi, too. These volumes contain several erudite notices on subjects relating to the period covered in the main work. Amongst these notices are included extracts from relevant non-historical literature.

The Mughal period is covered by the next three volumes namely, volumes V-VII. However, relevant extracts from works

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, I, Editor's Preface, p.ix.

written during the Mughal times dealing with the history of earlier rulers are spersed all over these three volumes.

The last volume contains, as Dowson himself mentioned, 'ample and diversified matter',[1] It deals with nearly as many works as those covered by the first seven volumes. In all the eighth volume includes notices of and extracts from seventy Indo-Persian works covering the history of the eighteenth-century India. At the end there is a detailed index of seventy-nine pages. It may be remarked that Dowson's part of the work is specifically mentioned in the preface of each volume, and in the body of the work his contributions are marked by brackets. Also each volume[2] lists at the outset the names of those who had translated for Elliot Persian works into English.

Attention to chronology was the guiding principle in Dowson's editing and completion of Elliot's work. His aim was to present extracts from various histories in such a way as to present a continuous history of Muslim rule in India. This intention is visible in his change of Elliot's plan according to which sources were to be divided in 'general' and 'particular' histories. Even though Elliot's bibliographical work had gradually assumed a more historical

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, VII, Preface, p.vi.

[2] The contributors of volume one are mentioned in volume II.

character, Elliot had not intended fully to subordinate the bibliographical character of the work to the production of a continuous history. This is apparent from his having retained to the end the original plan of dividing his sources under 'general' and 'particular' categories.[1] However, Dowson did not maintain this division as it militated against producing a continuous account.[2]

Dowson's aim to produce a complete and continuous history is reflected in his decision to incorporate lengthy extracts on the reigns of Babur and Humayun. Erskine's House of Taimur and Erskine and Leyden's translation of the Tuzuk-i-Baburi had not left much scope for giving extracts from Indo-Persian sources then available. However, for the reign of Babur Dowson decided to include in Elliot & Dowson lengthy extracts from Erskine and Leyden's translation of the Tuzuk-i-Baburi. To have passed over Babur's Memoirs, so wrote Dowson, 'on the ground of previous publication would have left a blank in this work which no other writer could supply.'[3] Even more suggestive is his inclusion of extracts from Jauhar's Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat and from other sources on the reign of Humayun. There was not only a complete trans-

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[1] See the revised plan prefixed to Elliot's Arabs in Sind.
[2] Elliot & Dowson, I, Editor's preface, pp. ix-x.
[3] ibid., IV, Preface, p. vii.

lation of Jauhar's work but also a large volume on the life of the emperor-the second volume of Erskine's House of Taimur. Inclusion of extracts about a subject on which, in Dowson's own opinion, Erskine's work left 'nothing to be desired' and at a time when India House was constantly pressing Thomas and Dowson for every possible curtailment of the work, is very revealing.[1] His strong determination to achieve chronological completion overbore pressure from official quarters.

Dowson achieves his purpose of providing a continuous history of medieval Muslim rule in India not by writing that history himself, but by linking together translations from the writings of Indo-Muslim historians in Persian. His strong regard for a continuous history must be viewed in relation to his concept of history.

There are no extant papers of Dowson to enable us to obtain first-hand knowledge of his concepts of history. To try to understand his intellectual disposition we must, therefore, employ circumstantial evidence and his writings other than Elliot & Dowson. Elliot & Dowson by itself cannot be a complete guide to Dowson's ideas on history as it can be argued that he had a more rounded idea of the content of history than Elliot & Dowson would suggest and that he

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, IV, p. 229

considered a chronological account of Indo-Muslim history as an essential preliminary in the then state of the study of the subject.

As already noticed, Dowson was a self-taught man. His early, indeed chief, intellectual training had been in the milieu of the Royal Asiatic Society, a society dominated in the mid-nineteenth century by linguists. Himself a linguist, and surrounded by linguists, Dowson was more likely than not to imbibe the conventional ideas of history, that is, regarding history as narration of political events and episodes.

The intellectual milieu of the University College, London, in the late eighteen-fifties could have been another influence on Dowson's ideas. As already stated, he had taught there between 1855 and 1859. It is, therefore, important to know the state of historical studies at the University College during Dowson's stay there. E.S. Creasy (1812-1878) was then the professor of history at the college.[1] His historical works Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World (1852), The Invasions and Projected Invasions of England, from the Saxon Times (1852), History of the Ottoman Turks: From the Beginning of their empire to the present day,[2] indicate that

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[1] vide the calendars of the University College, London, for those years.

[2] I have consulted the edition of 1858 published at London - 2 vols.

Creasy identified history with political history. Political history itself had a narrow connotation for Creasy. His histories lack any study of institutions. Furthermore, his approach is that of a conventional historian -descriptive, biographical and anecdotal. It is significant that under the influence of Creasy historical studies at the University College, London remained completely unaffected by those contemporary ideas which were revolutionising the scope of historical studies at that time. The nature of question papers set for history students at the college between the years 1856-59 show that the ideas of Comte, Buckle, Marx and Spencer had no influence upon the history teaching of the college.[1]

Dowson was thus a part of that milieu which reflected the contemporary trend of the historical writings of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), J.A. Froude (1818-1894), E.A. Freeman (1823-1892) and S.R. Gardiner (1829-1902), all of whom confined the scope of their writings to political history.[2] Carlyle and his disciples notably Froude, regarded history but the 'collective biography' of the prominent public

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[1] The University College, London, Calendars for the sessions 1856-57, 1857-58, 1858-9, pp. 145-47, 140-41, 83-85 respectively.

[2] This and the following paragraphs are based on G.P. Gooch's History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 301-44, and Barnes', A History of Historical Writing, (1962, 2nd ed.), pp. 189-91, 292-93, 305-06.

figures. Indeed, narration of political events was the 'obsession of the conventional historian.'[1]

It may be remarked that in the nineteenth century the scope of political history itself was very narrow. To say nothing of the development of the state and its various organs in relation to other forces in society, political history neglected the study even of political institutions by themselves. Even where a historian undertook constitutional and institutional developments he often 'buried threads of constitutional and institutional development under .. a mass of biographical, anecdotal and episodical material.'[2] A telling example of this is S.R. Gardiner the first two volumes of whose history appeared only two years before Dowson undertook to edit Elliot's work. Creasy was also interested in constitutional history. In 1848 he had published a booklet The Textbook of the Constitution. Here though Creasy shows occasional awareness of the correlation between social forces and constitutional issues,[3] his main concern was to give factual and legalistic information without welding it in a coherent whole. The placing of institutional developments within the context of general social history was only

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[1]Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, p. 292.

[2]ibid, p. 305.

[3]The Text-Book of the Constitution, London 1848. pp. 55-59.

marginal to Creasy's approach to the subject. The same trend is visible from the question papers set by Creasy for history students at the University College, London.[1]

Having reviewed the intellectual world of which Dowson was a part we may now turn to his writings other than Elliot & Dowson which indicate his concept of history. It comes out most suggestively from his interpretation and use of inscriptional evidence. His article 'Indian Inscriptions' in the Encyclopaedia Britannica reveals that for him the primary importance and usefulness of the inscriptional evidence consisted in providing dates or settling disputed chronologies.[2] It is significant that Dowson is oblivious of the value for social and religious history of this kind of evidence. The inscriptions in the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, Karlen, Kanheri, Nasik, and Junir were of 'no historical value' for Dowson as 'they simply commemorate the dedication

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[1] We may give a few examples of the questions set by Creasy - 'Mention the principal checks on the Royal Authority at the time of the accession of Henry VII', 'What were the general constitutional rights of the members of a new English colony which is formed by Occupation?' (The University College, London, Calendar for the Session 1857-58, p.141); 'Quote the words of the Great Charter which affirm the principle of Trial by Jury. In what respect did the functions of the early Juries differ from those of modern Juries?' 'What were the principal constitutional checks on the Regal power at the time when the House of Tudor came to the throne' (ibid, 1858-59,p.85)

[2] Dowson's article is included in the main article 'Inscriptions', Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1881 (9th ed.), pp. 118-21.

of a cave, chamber, cistern, or some other votive gift, coupled with the name of the donor.'[1] However, he feels constrained to mention that the great cave-temple at Karlen is recorded to have been constructed for an emperor.[2] Furthermore, for Dowson inscriptions mentioning grants of lands by kings for religious purposes were 'historically valuable because, they contain not only the name of the grantor, but a more or less complete list of his predecessors.'[3] He is ignorant of the significance of such inscriptions for religious and economic history.

Indeed, for Dowson inscriptional evidence was useful only in so far as it provided factual data about political history. He regarded inscriptions as an important source for the history of ancient India because 'the Hindus did not write history.'[4] But inscriptions of later times, though numerous, were of much less historical importance, 'as the Mahometans are good historians.'[5] Muslim inscriptions were occasionally valuable in settling dates, 'but most of them record the erection of mosques, palaces and tombs.'[6]

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[1] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1881 (9th ed) p. 119
[2] ibid, 120.
[3] ibid, p. 118.
[4] ibid, p. 121.
[5] ibid, p. 121.
[6] ibid, p. 121.

Dowson's comments on the importance of inscriptional evidence thus suggest that the narration of political events in chronological framework was basic to his concept of history. The study of religious, social and economic conditions of the people was alien to his notions of history. Apparently, he was not aware of society as an area of human interaction.

Examination of Dowson's selections from Indo-Persian histories for Elliot & Dowson confirms our views regarding his concept of history based on circumstantial evidence and his attitude towards inscriptional evidence. A comparison between his selections and the works from which selections have been made reveal that Dowson omitted from Elliot & Dowson materials relevant for a study of the nature and working of the state, of the development of political institutions and of intellectual history.

Dowson's disregard for political thought in historical processes is evident fromhis exclusion from Elliot & Dowson of materials indicative of intellectual history. For instance, he omits from Barani's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi the dialogue between Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) and Maulana Shams al-din which expounds certain basic Indo-Muslim theories.[1] Even when he includes materials expressive of Barani's political thought, it is not out of

[1] Fuller, A.R. 'Translations from the Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi', JASB, Vol. XXXIX, Part I, 1870, pp. 16-19.

concern for political thought. Having given 'counsel of the wise' at one place from Barani, Dowson feels the need of commenting that 'These 'counsels for the wise', which so frequently appear, are, in most cases, only expositions of the author's own opinions. I have translated these replies in order that it may be seen how a subsequent writer deals with them'[1] Dowson's omissions of the introductory part of Shams Siraj Afif's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi is another example of his disregard for intellectual history.

Elliot & Dowson is lacking not merely in materials for the study of the working of government and the political idiom of medieval India, but also in materials for the study of political institutions of medieval India. For instance, Dowson was blind to the role of nobility (defined as 'the class of persons who were officers of the king and at the same time formed the superior class in the political order')[2] in politica and life. He evinced complete indifference to the strength, composition and organisation of the nobility. Furthermore his conception of political history excluded even factional politics and the participation of individual nobles in that politics.

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, III, p. 178 fn.

[2] Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb, Asia Publishing House, 1970 (reprint) Introduction, p.2.

Dowson's lack of interest in the nobility is manifest from his systematic exclusion from Elliot & Dowson of details concerning the ranks, positions, promotions, demotions and actions of individual nobles. We may cite a few specific instances of such omissions. He omits from Minhaj Siraj's Tabaqat-i-Nasiri not only a list of Iltutmish's officers, but also a detailed account of the Muizzi and Shamsi Maliks[1] which throws light on the relationship of the nobility with the sovereign, cohesion in the foreign nobility in the early days of their rule in India and the gradual development of fissiparous tendencies in the ruling elite.[2] Even more significant are omissions from Barani's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi of information concerning Iltutmish and Balban's policy which vitally influenced the racial composition of the nobility of their times.[3] From Barani he has also omitted the list of Ghiassuddin Tughlaq's ministers and principal officers and several of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's appointments.[4] It is

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[1] Cf. Raverty, H.G. (tr.) Tabakat-i-Nasiri, A General History of the Muhammadan dynasties of Asia, including Hindustan. London, 1881, pp. 624-28, 670-74, 719-99.

[2] Athar Ali, 'Foundations of Akbar's Organisation of the Nobility: An Interpretation', Medieval India Quarterly, Vol. III (1957-58) p. 290.

[3] Barani's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi edited by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (Bibliotheca Indica Series) Calcutta 1862, pp. 36-39; Athar Ali, 'Foundations of Akbar's Organisation of the Nobility: An Interpretation', Medieval India Quarterly, Vol. III, pp. 290-91.

[4] cf. A.Colvin's 'Translations from the Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi', JASB, Vol. 40 (1871), p. 225.

noteworthy that often omissions concerning the nobles are the only omissions from the otherwise lengthy extracts included in Elliot & Dowson. This is particularly noticeable in Dowson's copious extracts from the Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri and Muntakhab-ul-Lubab.[1] A very significant omission from the Muntakhab ul-Lubab is Khwafi Khan's exposition of the crisis in the jagirdari system towards the close of Aurangzib's reign.[2]

Dowson's disregard for the history of the nobility of medieval India is reflected equally in his almost contemptuous attitude towards those works which do provide substantial data on the personnel and the activities of the ruling elite. For instance, he regards the Padshahnamah of Abdul Hamid Lahori abounding in 'trifles' such as the grants of titles, to the nobles, changes in the offices of the nobility, augmentation of their mansabs, etc.[3] These details which make the Padshahnamah indispensable for a study of the nobility of Shah Jahan's time are regarded by Dowson to be 'of no interest to any one but the nobles and courtiers of time'.[4]

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[1] It may be mentioned that the omissions are often indicated.

[2] Muntakhab-al Lubab, ed. K.D. Admad and Haig, Bibliotheca Indica Series, 1860-74, pp. 396-97. Cf. Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzib, pp. 92-94.

[3] Elliot & Dowson, VII, p. 4.

[4] ibid, p.4.

From Lahori's Padshahnamah Dowson has omitted not only specific details about individual nobles, but also Shah Jahan's reorganisation of the mansabdari system which is the main source of information on the subject.[1]

Dowson's complete indifference to the nobility presents a contrast to Elliot's keen interest on the subject. As indicated in the previous chapter, Elliot's main interest in the Indo-Muslim history had been centred on the aristocracy. In excluding from Elliot & Dowson materials on the subject of Elliot's interest - materials which would have been included in Elliot's work if he had lived to complete it himself - Dowson was responsible in narrowing the scope of Elliot's undertaking.

Differences in Elliot and Dowson's interests extend also to revenue, fiscal and administrative history. These facets of the history of Muslim rule in India had much attraction for Elliot for practical reasons. However, Dowson exhibits a merely superficial and spasmodic interest in this aspect of Indo-Muslim history. The tables of revenue resources, details of fiscal and administrative divisions given in the full texts of Persian histories are invariably absent from Dowson's selections. For example, only a small

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[1] cf. Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb, Asia Publishing House, 1970, pp. 54-55.

portion of the account of Alauddin Khalji's measures to control prices and to increase the state-revenues have been given from Barani's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi. Also Barani's observations on Firoz Shah Tughlaq's canals and the effect of those canals on trade and agriculture of the country have been omitted from Elliot & Dowson.[1] Also, with the exception of some details of Todar Mal's revenue arrangements, not much information has been given on Akbar's revenue and fiscal policies.

The constant pressure from India House to reduce the size of the work was partly responsible for some of these fundamental limitations in Dowson's work. It was only after all these editorial omissions that Dowson was able to contain the work in eight volumes. In 1871 when India House was pressurizing Dowson and Thomas to contain Elliot's work in five volumes, Dowson did not think it possible that the work could be compressed in less than eight volumes despite his efforts to 'keep out all unimportant matter.'[2] To contain Elliot's work in eight volumes Dowson made numerous and in some respects more significant omissions from the later period dealing with the decline of the Mughal empire

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[1] Barani, Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi (Bibliotheca Indica edition of 1862), pp. 567-71.

[2] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/408, no. 2354, Dowson's letter addressed to Thomas, IOL.

and the emergence of the British on the Indian political scene.

Dowson substantially curtailed Elliot's materials for the history of eighteenth-century India. Thus, for instance, Dowson has given only two extracts from the Jauhar-i-Samsam composed in 1740-1 A.D.[1] of which Elliot had made an abridged translation.[2] Similarly, from the Bayan-i-Waqi (composed towards the end of the eighteenth century) of Khwajah Abd al-Karim[3], Nigar-namah-i-Hind of S. Ghulam Ali Naqvi written in early nineteenth century.[4] Muntakhab al-Tawarikh of Sadasukh Niyaz Dihlawi composed in 1817-18,[5] and Yadgar-i-Bahadur of Bahadur Singh [6] completed in 1833-34, Dowson has omitted major portions of Elliot's translations. Indeed, Dowson's treatment of the entire eighteenth century is very sketchy. In one volume he has covered seventy-one works - nearly as many as had been given together in the first seven volumes.

It is significant that Dowson when faced with the necessity of keeping Elliot's work within eight volumes, decided to omit

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[1] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, pp. 73-74.

[2] Add. MS., 30, 724, ff. 1-80, B.M.

[3] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, pp. 124-31; B.M. Add. MS., 30, 782, ff. 64-113.

[4] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, pp. 396-402; B.M. Add. MS. 30, 784, ff. 162-230.

[5] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, pp. 403-411; B.M. Add. MS. 30, 786, ff. 82-291.

[6] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, pp. 417-25; B.M. Add., MS. 30, 786, ff. 292-391.

from Elliot & Dowson a sizeable portion of Elliot's materials on the eighteenth century. It indicates that Dowson, unlike Elliot, was not motivated even subconsciously by political considerations in that he wished to prove the superiority of British rule in India as distinct from assuming that it was for the best. This was so despite Dowson's urgent plea in 1872 (for obtaining the extension of grant from the India House) that 'it will be inexpedient to cut down the work as it reaches the period of our own rise to power - when native writers give their versions of the facts and express their opinion as to our merits and demerits as conquerors.'[1] It is significant that Dowson prefers to include materials on the history of Babur and Humayun, a subject on which as he himself conceded, Erskine's House of Taimur left little scope for historians of the day.[2] He did so at the cost of not including materials on the history of the eighteenth-century India - materials which could have presented a favourable picture of British rule in India. It may be remarked that several of the works for the eighteenth century collected by Elliot had been written under the patronage of British officials and that they are full of praise for the British rulers

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[1]Dowson's letter of 13th August 1872 to Thomas - Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/408, no. 2354. IOL.

[2]Elliot & Dowson, IV, pp. 229

in India.[1] However, academic considerations prevailed and Dowson paid greater attention to the earlier period. It was undoubtedly the fact that Elliot & Dowson was supposedly the history of Muhammadan rule in India which induced Dowson to pay more attention to the earlier period at the cost of the later.

The work of Elliot and Dowson greatly advanced British historical knowledge of Muslim rulers of India. Dowson, in the preface to the last volume of Elliot & Dowson thus sums up the value of his and Elliot's monumentous work: 'it has been the means of bringing to the knowledge of Europeans, the merits and demerits of many histories, some entirely unknown, or, if at all, known only by name and repute.'[2]

In Elliot & Dowson we find the 'pioneer conspectus of sources' of the history of the Ghaznavids.[3] By giving extracts from the Tarikh-i-Baihaqi, Tarikh-i-Jahan-gushay Juwaini, and the Tarikh-i Wassaf, Elliot and Dowson made

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[1] See, for instance, pp. 195, 232, 396-7, 405 of Elliot & Dowson, Vol. VIII.

[2] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, Preface, p.viii.

[3] Bosworth, C.E. The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994-1040, Edinburgh, 1963, p.7.

available materials which could enable British historians to study the history of early Muslim rule in India against the background of development in central Asia.

Elliot & Dowson for the first time made available to those ignorant of Persian a substantial part of Barani's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, not covered by the translations of Major A.R. Fuller, P. Walley and A. Colvin in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.[1] Similarly, Elliot and Dowson for the first time made a greater part of the Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi of Afif available to British scholars. A part of Afif's work translated in English in the Journal of the Archaeological Society of Dehli in 1849 was inconsiderable as compared to what was given in Elliot & Dowson.[2] Yahya ibn Ahmad Sirhindi's Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi now made its first appearance in translation.

Elliot & Dowson also brought forward several Afghan sources - the Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi or the Tuhfat-i Akbar Shahi of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, Tarikh-i Daudi of Abd Allah and the Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana of Ahmad Yadgar, the inaccessibility of which had prevented Erskine from writing a detailed history

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[1] Fuller, A.R. 'Translations from the Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi', JASB, Vol. 38, pp. 181-220, Vol. 39, pp. 1-51; P. Walley's 'Translations from the Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi' (ibid, Vol. 40 (1871), pp. 185-216), and A. Colvin's translation concerning the reign of Ghiasuddin ibid, pp. 217-246 appeared simultaneously withthe third volume of Elliot & Dowson.

[2] Journal Of the Archaelogical Society of Dehli, Vol. I, pp.1-38.

of the Afghans in India. Elliot & Dowson performed a similar service for the Mughal period. Parts of the Tabaqat-i-Akbari of Nizam-ud din Ahmad, Lahori's Padshahnamah, Inayat Khan's Shah Jahan Namah and Khwafi Khan's Muntakhabul Lubab were for the first time made available in English.

However, Elliot & Dowson was far from being a complete and exhaustive study of the Indo-Persian literature for medieval Indian history. First, as has been seen, the work concerns itself only with certain limited aspects of political history. Moreover, the selected translations that have been published are often marred by inaccuracies and imperfections. S.H. Hodivala's Studies in Indo-Muslim History: A Critical Commentary on Elliot and Dowson's History of India as told by its own Historians,[1] show the limitations of Elliot and Dowson's linguistic scholarship. Translations have been made without critical collation and comparison of the original text with other copies of the same work.

However, in fairness to Elliot's and Dowson's immense labours and accomplishment it must be pointed out that the above discussed limitations were inherent in the nature of their undertaking and the circumstances in which the work was completed. It was humanly impossible in the time, and with the

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[1] Published in 1939 from Bombay. The second volume appeared posthumously in 1957.

resources available to Dowson to apply to one hundred and fifty works the severest standards of textual and linguistic scholarship. Elliot had conducted his researches amidst the arduous duties of his office. His project required not merely translating from and appraising of the Indo-Persian sources, but also the search for those works. Dowson himself was aware of the limitations of the work. In the preface of the last volume of Elliot & Dowson he wrote thus:

> 'I am conscious that there must be many imperfections and errors in the eight volumes. The voluminous extent of the work would not allow of deliberate study, for the utmost span of life I could hope for would not have sufficed for anything like full and careful study of every MS. I have had to examine. Living far away from great libraries,[1] I have had access to few books beyond my own limited collection and I have seldom enjoyed the advantage of taking counsel with others upon doubtful passages and abscure allusions. The completion of the work has been my grand aim; and to achieve this end, I have often pressed on when I would have preferred to wait and consider - to enquire for other copies of MSS., and compare the statements of other writers.'[2]

The value of Elliot & Dowson has consisted in its being a pioneer work on the sources of medieval Indian history. Hodivala's Studies in Indo-Muslim History: A Critical Commentary on Elliot & Dowson's History of India as told by its own Historians in bringing out the faults of Elliot's and

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[1] He was living in Wokingham.

[2] Elliot & Dowson, VIII, Preface, p.vi.

Dowson's scholarship, nevertheless praises the contribution of their work to medieval Indian history. Hodivala points out that the value of Elliot & Dowson 'has grown with the lapse of time.'[1] Indeed Hodivala's 'Commentary' became possible chiefly because of the researches initiated and stimulated by the magnum-opus of Elliot and Dowson.

The publication of Elliot & Dowson was well received in many quarters of educated society. A reviewer of the eighth volume of Elliot & Dowson regarded it as 'the most valuable contributions ever made to Oriental science.'[2] In the words of R. Rost, the librarian to the India House, various volumes of the work 'have been received with unqualified praise both in India and Europe.'[3] All reviewers recognised the importance of Elliot and Dowson's work in providing enlarged evidential basis for historians of medieval India. However, some regarded it as but the end of the beginning of further researches on the subject. In the words of a reviewer of the third volume of Elliot & Dowson, 'The work will be of long lasting value as an introduction to Indian historiography. Being such, it naturally cannot be

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[1] Hodivala, op. cit., Preface, p.v.

[2] The Indian Antiquary, Vol. VII (1878), p.182.

[3] 'Librarian's Observations', Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/386, no. 1435. IOL.

considered more than the beginning of an undertaking the proper continuation of which would be the translation of all the works printed in the Bibliotheca Indica relating to Indian history.'[1]

Though the completion of the work was not politically inspired, the character of the reception it received was politically inspired. For the reviewers of the Athenaeum and the Englishman the significance and importance of Elliot & Dowson was for reasons other than those of academic merits. The reviewer of the Athenaeum failed to see that the first volume of Elliot & Dowson had made any contribution to the world of scholarship. He found the Arab travellers' accounts of India 'childish and ridiculous,'[2] and the historical portions of the volume relating to Sind 'equalling in style to that of a dull school boy in England.'[3] However, 'the childish and ridiculous' accounts and the 'dull' narratives did not detract from the significance of the work, which, in the view of the reviewer, was to underline the contribution of British rule in India.[4] This is stated more explicitly and boldly by the reviewer of the third volume

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[1] Ed. Sachau's review article in The Academy, Vol. II (1871), p. 485.

[2] The Athenaeum, 1867, p. 462.

[3] ibid, p. 462.

[4] ibid, p. 462-63.

of Elliot & Dowson in the Englishman. We may quote at length from the Englishman to appreciate the significance which came to be attached in some quarters to Elliot & Dowson in the political milieu of the post '1857-58' era:

> 'The extracts from the various Muhammadan histories are interesting, and give a clear idea of the nature of the Moslem conquest, and rule in India. The constant wars, rebellions, and massacres, as detailed in these histories, should do more to reconcile the Hindus to British rule than all the preaching and speechifying of the English in India, who are, of course, considered to be interested parties. Whether Hindus consider peace and the reign of justice as an equivalent for the loss of the excitement of wars, plunder, and employment in political life, is another question. There is no doubt they pay heavily in many respects for the order they enjoy under British rule, but a comparison with the amount of suffering they underwent during the Moslem reign should make the cost appear not too much.
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> 'These volumes of the late Sir H. Elliot should be used in all the schools in India as text-books. As histories of the Muhammedan period they would be received as authentic, and they would teach the rising generations what the ancient rule really was, which they are but too ready to believe in as far better than the modern government they are under. They cannot but conclude that as Hindustan appears to be doomed to remain under a foreign rule the British is the best they can possibly expect.'[1]

For all its politically inspired reception, the major contribution of Elliot & Dowson to British historiography consisted in making available to British scholars in a compact and comprehensible form a significant portion of the

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[1] The Englishman, September 21, 1871, p.2.

literary sources of medieval Indian history. Now in mid-Nineteenth century England there were other sources being explored. While Elliot and Dowson were concentrating on the literary sources, Edward Thomas was taking up the new field of Indo-Muslim numismatics.

Edward Thomas

Edward Thomas (December 1813 - February 1886) 'a name recognized over Europe as a prince in Oriental numismatics'[1], was the first British scholar to devote sustained attention to the study of Indo-Muslim coins. Also he was the first to attempt a statistical study of Mughal revenues.

Edward Thomas came from an upper-middle class Welsh-Scottish background. His father Honoratus Leigh Thomas of Hawarden, Flint, was a surgeon as was his maternal grandfather William Cumberland Cruikshank.[2] Honoratus Leigh was quite well known in his profession. In 1806 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.[3] At the College of Surgeons he occupied a prominent position - for several years he was an examiner, vice-president and president of the college.[4] Notwithstanding his position at the College of Surgeons, Honoratus Leigh avoided surgery and was called in for consultation in medical cases.[5] It is almost certain that his professional reputation owed much to his close association with John Hunter (1728-1793), a celebrated surgeon of his times,

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[1] Buckland, C.E. Dictionary of Indian Biography, London, 1906, p. 420.

[2] DNB, Vol. XIX, p. 662; obituary notice, Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Vol. V (1843-50), pp. 640-41.

[3] Loc. cit.

[4] For exact dates see DNB, Vol XIX, pp. 662-63.

[5] Loc. cit. See also, Clarke, James F. Autobiographical Recollections of the Medical Profession, London, 1874, p.113-114.

and Cruishank (1745-1800), a well-known Scotch anatomist, whose pupil Honoratus Leigh was[1]. Later he married Cruishank's daughter and succeeded to his practice in Leicester Place, London.[2]

Edward Thomas was probably the youngest of Honoratus Leigh's five children.[3] Very little is known of his early life except that he studied in Hammersmith before he entered the East India College at Haileybury in 1830. In view of his upper-middle class background it may be safely assumed that he studied at a good private school where he learnt Greek and Latin. It is perhaps to these early days that he owed his knowledge of French and German.

Edward Thomas's decision to enter the Indian Civil Service may be related to his father's association with the East.[4] In 1792 on the recommendation of John Hunter Honoratus Leigh

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[1]For biographical details of John Hunter see DNB, XXVIII (1891), pp. 287-93, and for Cruishank Vol. XIII (1888), pp.260-61.

[2]DNB, Vol. XIX, pp. 662-63.

[3]This inference is suggested by Edward Thomas's having been mentioned last of all amongst Honoratus Leigh's children. Thomas's brother, Honoratus Leigh, who was born in 1802, is third in the order of mention - vide Honoratus Leigh's will in the Public Records Office, London, in the Probates for the year 1846.

[4]It is interesting to note that even his elder brother - Honoratus Leigh Thomas - did not enter their father's profession. Instead he studied at Oxford and entered the church (Alumni Oxonienses, 1715-1886, p. 188).

was appointed assistant surgeon to the embassy of Lord Macartney to China.[1] This mission supposedly 'proved most creditable to the medical staff, whose services were highly estimated, not only by the members of the embassy and the ship's company, but also by troops quartered at Chusan.'[2] It may be conjectured that Honoratus Leigh's being in the retinue of Lord Macartney's embassy led to his association with the India House circles. He was intimately acquainted with Jacob Bosanquet on whose recommendation Thomas was given the nomination by William Astell.[3] It may be pointed out that Lord Macartney was the Governor of Madras from 1781 to 1785, and was subsequently offered the post of Governor-General of India and later the presidency of the Board of Control.[4]

After completing his course at Haileybury successfully, Thomas arrived at Calcutta on 22nd November, 1832.[5] His first appointment was as assistant to the Commissioner of revenue and circuit, Meerut division, but he remained at Calcutta as officiating assistant to Secretary, Sudder Board

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[1] Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Vol. V. (1843-50), p. 640.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Haileybury: Petitions, J/1/48, pp. 257-63. IOL.

[4] DNB, Vol. XIII, pp. 405-06.

[5] Bengal Civilians, O/6/29. IOL.

of Revenue.[1] He was next appointed assistant to the Commissioner at Kumaon and after a few months to Commissioner at Bareilly.[2] In November 1837 he became the joint magistrate and deputy collector of Saharanpur where he stayed till December 1838 when he returned to England on 'urgent private affairs'.[3] On his return to India in October 1840 Thomas officiated for a while as the first magistrate and collector of Mirzapur and was subsequently appointed as joint magistrate and deputy collector at Aligarh.[4] In February 1842 he was transferred to Saharanpur as officiating collector and magistrate. Later he was confirmed in the post of first magistrate and deputy collector at Saharanpur which he retained until December, 1844 when he again came to England to return to India only in November 1849.[5] His prolonged stay in Britain was necessitated by his health.[6] On returning to India after

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[1] Bengal Civilians, O/6/ 29, IOL

[2] 'The demise of Mr. E. Thomas', JASB, Vol. LV, Part I, Proceedings, p. 72; Agra Civil Servants, L/F/10/163 (1838), IOL.

[3] Bengal Civilians, O/6/29, IOL.

[4] Agra Civil Servants, L/F/10/166 (1841), IOL

[5] Bengal Civilians, O/6/29, IOL

[6] see his medical certificate, Financial Department Home Correspondence (IOL), L/F/2/113, no. 74 of November, 1847; also volume 123, no. 56 of January 1849.

an absence of five years he was appointed first magistrate and deputy collector at Panipat.[1] In 1850 he became officiating under-secretary in the civil department with the Governor-General[2]. In this capacity he was in the Panjab with Lord Dalhousie's camp.[3] Lord Dalhousie was impressed with Thomas's ability and offered him the post of Secretary in the Foreign Office in succession to Sir Henry Miers Elliot.[4] However, Thomas felt obliged to decline Lord Dalhousie's offer on medical grounds.[5] In 1852 he again came to Europe on furlough. On his return he was appointed in 1854 to be magistrate and collector of Delhi.[6] Later he was appointed superintending judge of Sagar in the Central Provinces. In 1856 he again came to England on leave.[7] In 1857 he returned to India for a few weeks merely to complete the period required for a reduced pension.[8] He retired from service on 9th February 1857 on an invalid annuity of £250.[9]

There are two main features in the official career of

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[1] Bengal Civilians, O/6/29, IOL.

[2] Bengal Civil Servants, L/F/10/34 (1851-52), IOL.

[3] vide Thomas's letter of 23rd November 1850 to General C.R. Fox, Add. MS. 39,997, f.23, BM. See also Men of the Time: A Dictionary of Contemporaries, containing notices of eminent characters of both sexes, London 1884 (11th ed.),p.1041.

[4] Men of the Time, 1884 London, pp. 1041-42, DNB, Vol.XIX,p.658.

[5] Loc. cit.

[6] Bengal Civilians, O/6/29. IOL.

[7] Loc.cit.

[8] Men of the Time, London 1884 (11th ed.) p. 1042.

[9] Loc. cit. Bengal Civilians, O/6/29 (IOL); Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/200 (1856) no.131 of December (IOL).

Thomas. First, his experiences in India were concentrated on the North-Western Provinces. Second, his ill-health frequently interfered with his official career. He had to forego regular promotions during his absences to Britain.[1] Moreover, as already noticed, health reasons prevented him from taking up the important post of secretary in the foreign department of the government of India.

It was during his long stay in Britain between 1845-49 that Thomas made his debut in the world of literature. Though his first work appeared only in 1846 his interest in oriental subjects dated from the early years of his arrival in India in 1832. Previous to his first absence in Britain in 1838-39 he had been collecting (and presumably) studying coins. He contributed during his stay in Britain several specimens of coins and medals to H.H. Wilson's forthcoming publication on Bactrian coins and antiquities.[2] By 1841 he was well conversant with the then knowledge of Bactrian and Muhammadan coins. He wrote at least two letters to Wilson on these subjects in 1841.[3] As the letters make it evident,

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[1] vide Thomas's letter of 28th August 1839 to The Court of Directors - Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/43, no. 3 of September (IOL); Thomas's letter of 21st June 1850 to General C.R. Fox, Letters to General C.R. Fox, Add. MS. 39,997, f.17 (B.M.)

[2] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/100, no.70 of June 1846 (IOL); Wilson, H.H. Ariana Antiqua: A descriptive account of the Antiquities and Coins of Afghanistan, London 1841, Preface, p. ix, see also, pp. 415,422,432-34.

[3] Wilson MSS: Miscellaneous Correspondence and Notes, Eur. MS. E 160, ff. 85-87. IOL.

by then he had, indeed, begun to interpret the significance of coins for historical purposes. His article on the coins of Delhi Sultans as well as of the Hindu kings of Kabul made public in 1846, presuppose the possession of a good knowledge of Persian histories and a general historical background of the East.

However, it was only during his extended stay in Britain in the years 1845-49 that Thomas seriously commenced his literary career. Thanks to his illnesses, he was free from official duties and consequently had ample time for other and scholarly activities. The nature of his illness must have impeded him a social activity. In 1847 Thomas was suffering from 'an irritable condition of the mucous membrane, especially in the urinary organs.'[1] In 1848-49 he suffered from dyspepsia and general debility.[2]

It is likely that Thomas's poor health was responsible for turning his mind seriously to literary pursuits. He himself appears to have anticipated further interruptions and obstacles in his official career on account of his health. He probably looked to literature for that recognition of which the gaining in his career his health was to deny him. Between 1846-49 he

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[1] vide medical certificate in the Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/113, no. 74 of November 1847. IOL.

[2] Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/123, no. 56 of January 1849. IOL.

wrote five long and scholarly articles which brought him to the notice of orientalists and numismatists.[1]

The career of writing and publication thus begun was to remain central to the remainder of Thomas's life. Within two years of his return to India in 1849 he published Supplementary Contributions to the Series of the Coins of the Patan Sultans, (Delhi, 1851).[2] The same year he published his first article - Eight Kufic Coins in the Panjab -in the JASB to which he was later to become a regular contributor.[3] In 1852 he wrote a 'Note on Col. Stacey's Ghazni Coins.'[4] In 1853 he published an article on Sassanian coinage.[5] In 1854 he wrote a brief note on the excavations at Sarnath.[6] In 1855 he published

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[1] These articles were: (i) 'Coins of the Patan, Afghan or Ghori Sultans of Hindustan (Delhi)', Numismatic Chronicle, Vols. IX and X pp. 79,43-62,127-43,151-78. (Thomas published this article in the form of a booklet as On the Coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan.- References in the present chapter are for this booklet). (ii) 'On the Coins of the Dynasty of the Hindu Kings of Kabul', JRAS, Vol. IX, 1848, pp. 177-98, (iii) 'On the Coins of the Kings of Ghazni', ibid, pp. 267-386 (iv) 'On the Dynasty of the Sah Kings of Surashtra', ibid, Vol. XII (1850), pp. 1-78, and (v) 'The Pehlvi coins of the early Mohammedan Arabs', Ibid, pp. 253-347.

[2] The 'Supplement' was later published in the Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XV (1852-53), pp. 121-75.

[3] Vol. XX, pp. 537-43.

[4] JASB, Vol. XXI, pp. 115-27.

[5] 'Notice on certain unpublished coins of the Sassanidae', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XV (1853), pp. 180-87.

[6] 'Notes on the present state of Excavations at Sarnath' JASB, Vol. XXII, pp. 469-77.

three articles on Guptas and ancient Indian numerals,[1] The next two years were spent on collecting, annotating and up-to-dating James Prinsep's essays scattered over various journals. He published this work after retirement as Prinsep's Essays on Indian Antiquities and Useful Tables with notes in two volumes.[2]

Thomas actively continued after retirement the oriental subjects he had been pursuing for well over a decade. His annuity of £250 together with an inheritance from his parents presumably sufficed for the needs of a single man.[3] Free from financial worries and with no family obligations, Thomas had leisure to devote to oriental studies which came to be seen as 'the charm if not the recognized business of his life.'[4] Thomas's researches mostly appeared in the form of articles in the journals of the Asiatic societies of Great

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[1](i) 'On the Epoch of the Gupta Dynasty' JASB, Vol. XXIV, (1855), pp. 371-96, (ii) 'On the Coins of the Gupta Dynasty', ibid, pp. 483-518, and (iii) 'On Ancient Indian Numerals', ibid, pp. 551-71.

[2]Published in 1858 by John Murray of Albemarle Street, London. This work has been abbreviated as Prinsep's Essays.

[3]For living expenses and habits in Victorian England see Mrs. C.S. Peel's article 'Homes and Habits', Early Victorian England (ed. G.M. Young), O.U.P., 1951, pp. 79-151. See especially pp. 104-107 for the cost of living. It may be pointed out that Thomas left two leasehold houses and a personal estate of £4,749, and some property in Almorah, India. vide Thomas's will, 282/will, 1-3-1886, Somerset House, London.

[4]Obituary notice by S. Lane-Poole in the JRAS, 1886, Annual Report, p. xl.

Britain and of Bengal and the Numismatic Chronicle. A few of his articles were published in the Journal Asiatique and the Indian Antiquary.

Archaeology - paleography and more specifically numismatics dominated Thomas's literary activities even though later in life he wrote a few articles on subjects of more general interest.[1] Most of these grew out of his archaeological studies. Thus, for instance, Thomas's article on the faith of Asoka is related to some information on inscriptions then being deciphered. The basis of 'The Position of Women in the East in Olden Times' is a series of leaden coins containing legends indicative of various forms of marriage and inheritance. Similarly, 'Buddhist Symbols' grew out of his numismatic researches. Besides these articles of more general interest, Thomas wrote several essays on Bactrian, Sassanian, Armenian and Indo-Scythic coins and Indian metrology, Sassanian gems and inscriptions.[2] In 1866 he published a long article on the

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[1] These articles are:
(i) 'The Early Faith of Asoka' JRAS, Vol. IX (NS) 1877, pp. 155-234.
(ii) 'The Position of Women in the East in Olden Times', ibid, Vol. XI (NS) 1879, pp 1-60.
(iii) 'The Indian Swastika and its Western Counterparts', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XX, 1880, pp.18-48.
(iv) 'The Rivers of the Vedas, and the Way Aryans entered India', JRAS, Vol. XV, 1883, pp 357-86.
(v) 'Jainism', Indian Antiquary, Vol. VIII (1879), pp 30-31.
(vi) 'Buddhist Symbols', ibid, Vol. IX (1880), pp.135-40.

[2] Bactrian subjects: - 'Bactrian Coins', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. II (NS) pp. 179-88, 259-67; 'Bactrian Alphabet', ibid, Vol. III (1862-63), pp. 225-35; 'On Bactrian Coins', ibid, Vol. IV (1864), pp. 193-211; 'Bactrian Coins and

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coinage of Bengal with a final instalment in 1873.[1] In 1871 appeared his Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Dehli and the Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire in India. His last great enterprise was the commencement and editing of the International Numismata Orientala which was intended to be an encyclopaedia of oriental numismatics.

Thomas contributed to the cause of oriental studies yet

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Indian dates', JRAS, Vol. IX (NS) 1877, pp. 1-21.

On Sassanian subjects - 'Sassanian Gems and Early Armenian Coins', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. VI (1866), pp. 241-48; 'Sassanian Inscriptions' JRAS, Vol. III (1868), pp. 241-358, 'Sassanian Coins', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XII (1872), pp. 33-59, 105-119, 271-86, Vol. XII, pp. 220-53.

On Armenian subjects: 'Early Armenian Coins' Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. VII (NS) 1867, pp. 141-56, 216-43, Vol. VIII, pp. 214-22, 284-304, Vol. XI (1871) pp. 202-226.

On Parthian numismatics: 'Indo-Parthian Coins', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. X (1870) pp. 139-63, 'Parthian and Indo-Sassanian Coins', JRAS, Vol. XV (1883), pp. 73-99.

Metrology and ancient Indian coinage: 'Ancient Indian Coins' Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. IV (1864) pp. 40-58, 114-32; 'The Earliest Indian Coinage', ibid pp. 263-88; 'On Ancient Indian Weights', JASB, Vol. XXXIII (1865), pp. 251-66, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 14-27, 51-70; 'Note on Indian Numerals', Journal Asiatique, tome II (sixieme serie) 1863, pp. 379-93.

[1] 'The Initial Coinage of Bengal', JRAS, Vol. II (NS), pp. 145-224. It was continued as 'The Initial Coinage of Bengal under the Early Muhammadan Conquerors', ibid, Vol.VI (1873), pp. 339-76.

in another way. Stanley Lane-Poole in his obituary notices of Thomas[1] specifically points out that Thomas was 'an energetic member of various socities in whose proceedings he took a lively interest.'[2] His 'influence and advice were deeply felt and valued' in the Royal Asiatic Society.[3] Again 'No man had done more by personal influence' to encourage the study of Oriental antiquities in England'.[4] Thomas was the treasurer of the Royal Asiatic Society for twenty-five years. Also he was a member of council of the society. He 'regularly abandoned the temptations of the Athenaeum club to attend the Council of the Asiatic (Society).'[5] Reader may be reminded here that it was owing to the efforts of Thomas that Elliot's work finally saw the light of the day.[6] Also the second edition of Elliot's Glossary was brought out at his initiative.[7] The second edition of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Asar al-Sanadid owes a special debt to Thomas.[8]

Thomas's scholarship was varied and extensive. He

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[1] S. Lane-Poole wrote obituary notices on Thomas both for the Athenaeum and the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society vide JRAS, 1886, Annual Report; p. xxxix, fn.1.

[2] Ibid, p. xli.

[3] Stanley Lane-Poole's article on Edward Thomas in the DNB, Vol. LVI (1898), p. 178.

[4] JRAS, 1886, Annual Report, p. xli.

[5] Loc. cit.

[6] See Chpater II.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Asar-oos-Sunnadeed: A History of old and new rulers or Government and of old and new Buildings, in the District of Delhi, Delhi 1854 (2nd ed.) Preface.

rendered invaluable services to oriental numismatics and palaeography. Specific mention may be made of his contribution to Pehlvi and Sassanian palaeography which were in their infancy when Thomas took them up. His contribution to these subjects were recognised by the Royal Society which elected him a Fellow on June 8, 1871[1]. He was elected a corresponding member of the Institute of France in January 1873 and an honorary member of the Russian Academy. [2] In 1876 he was elected the vice-president of the Royal Numismatic Society of the Council of which Society he was a member for the two ensuing years.[3] In 1884 Thomas was made a C.I.E. for his literary achievements.[4] In 1885 he was awarded the gold medal of the Numismatic Society of Britain.[5] Thomas alone from amongst our scholars found a place in the Men of the time: A Dictionary of Contemporaries, containing notices of Eminent characters of Both sexes (1884).

Thomas's concentration on numismatics becomes intelligible when studied against the background of a general upsurge of archaeological interest in the eighteen twenties, and more specifically, in thirties and forties. In 1827 James Tod in a

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[1] DNB, Vol. LVI (1898), p. 658

[2] Men of the Time, 1884, (11th ed.), p. 1042

[3] Numismatic Chronicle, Vols.XVI-XVIII, Proceedings.

[4] Ripon Papers: Correspondence with persons in England, B.P/7/5, no. 104. B.M.

[5] Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. V (Third series), Proceedings, pp. 13-15.

paper to the Royal Asiatic Society had brought to the notice of orientalists a hoard of coins he had collected in India.[1] Tod's paper[2] based on his own collection marked the beginnings of Indian numismatics - 'it brought into prominence for the first time many of the later well-known series of coins which were soon to revolutionise the whole concept of Indian history.'[3] However, the immediate impulse to the great interest in archaeology came from the excavations carried out by Generals Ventura and Court in the Manikyala stupa in 1830 and in similar remains in the Indus-Jhelum region in 1833 and 1834.[4] These excavations brought to light not only huge hoards of Buddhist relics and sculptures but also coins and inscriptions revealing the existence of a new family of rulers, the Kushanas. Masson's researches were equally spectacular. In 1833 he discovered the immense site of Begram which was called by him the 'Second Babylon.'[5] From Beghram and other places Masson amassed a

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[1] Tod had amassed 20,000 coins- Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. I, p.314.

[2] 'An Account of Greek, Parthian and Hindu Medals, found in India', Ibid, pp. 313-42

[3] Imam, Abu, Sir Alexander Cunningham and the Beginnings of Indian Archaeology, Dacca 1966, p.17.

[4] Ibid, p. 18; Sourindranath Roy, 'Fifty years of Indian Archaeology from Jones to Marshall', Ancient India, No. 9, 1953, p. 8.

[5] Charles Masson,'Memoir on the Ancient Coins found at Beghram, in the Kohistan of Kabul', JASB, 1834, p. 154.

huge collection of thirty thousand coins which later formed the raison d'etre of Wilson's Ariana Antiqua.[1]

Prinsep was quick to discern the importance of these discoveries. He was, therefore, anxious that search for archaeological remains should also be carried out in the North-Western Provinces. Through the pages of JASB he urged all those who had 'opportunities for forming collections in the upper provinces' to pay attention to collecting coins.[2] A great many company officers became curious about the 'mysterious remains' of the country. There was fame, name and money in such pursuits.[3] Several officers profusely began collecting coins and inscriptions which were mostly forwarded to Prinsep for interpretation. The abundance of such materials enabled Prinsep to publish a series of articles in the eighteen thirties on coins and facsimiles of inscriptions in the JASB. His papers further excited interest both in India and Europe.[4]

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[1] Ariana Antiqua, p.11.

[2] 'On Greek Coins', JASB, 1833, p. 28.

[3] Imam, Abu. op. cit., p. 21. Abu Imam points out that it was known that the Mackenzie collection was purchased by the Government of India for one lakh rupee.

[4] Ibid., p. 23.

It was during this upsurge of numismatic activity that Thomas landed in Calcutta in November 1832. He was in Calcutta when Charles Masson's article on the coins found at Beghram appeared in the JASB.[1] At the same time Captain Cautley's discovery of an ancient site near Behat was communicated to the Society.[2] A great many coins had been found at this site. It was in the same year that part of Ventura's coin-collection was exhibited at Calcutta.[3] During the time that Thomas was in Calcutta at least ten articles on numismatics appeared in the JASB. This concentrated numismatic activity presumably aroused Thomas's curiosity in the subject.

However, Thomas's presence in the North-Western Provinces was a major factor in fostering his interest in numismatics. Prinsep had emphasized that this region was probably very rich in antiquarian remains. As already noticed, he had urged the collection of coins in the 'upper provinces'. He had pointed out that 'it is by no means in the Punjab alone that we are to look for antiquarian riches: the north-western provinces of India offer as large a field of enquiry.'[4] In

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[1] Vol. III, pp. 152-74.

[2] It was published in the JASB, Vol. III, pp. 227-31.

[3] Imam, Abu, op. cit., pp. 18-19, f.n.4.

[4] 'On Greek Coins', JASB, 1833, p. 28.

1835 Tod also drew the attention of coin-collectors to the Indo-Gangetic provinces. To quote him, 'let not the antiquary forget the old cities on the east and west of Jumna..of which I have given lists, where his toil will be richly rewarded' for 'The field is not only large and rich, but not half-explored'.[1] Several officers responded to Prinsep and Tod's urges. Captain P. Cautley,[2] Dr. J. Swiney[3] and Col. Stacey,[4] to mention only a few, formed their large collections in the North-Western Provinces.

Thomas's first posting at Saharanpur in 1837 was vital for determining the course of his subsequent writing career.

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[1] Tod's letter to the editor - 'Indo-Grecian antiquities', The Asiatic Journal, Vol. XVII, May-August 1835, p. 13

[2] Later Sir Proby Thomas Cautley (1802-1871) - DNB, Vol. IX (1887) pp. 333-35. For his collection of coins see Prinsep's Essays, I, pp. 73-80, 196-208 and passim.

[3] Dr. John Swiney belonged to the Bengal Medical establishment. He was at Karnal for nearly twenty years - from 1814-34 - vide India Register, For Swiney's coin-collection see Ariana Antiqua, pp. 9, 17, 116, 415, 416 and Preface; Prinsep's essays, I, pp. 45, 46, 47, 52, 58, 116.

[4] Col. Stacey had a collection of nearly 6000 coins - part of this collection was from central India. Thomas's Catalogue, of the coins in the cabinet of the late Col. Stacey' JASB, XXVII (1858), p. 251; Prinsep's Essays, I, p. 197.

Captain Cautley, who had discovered an ancient site near Behat, was at Saharanpur.[1] Moreover, the ancient site itself was only a few miles away from Saharanpur.[2] There was yet another old place, nearly two miles north-west of Behat, where coins were found in abundance.[3] The presence of Cautley at Saharanpur and the nearness of two ancient sites undoubtedly played a decisive role in attracting Thomas's attention to archaeology. In this connection it is significant that Thomas's first coin collection was chiefly from Saharanpur and Karnal.[4]

For our present study Thomas's articles on the 'Pathan Sultans', Pathan Kings, the Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire together with his two long articles on the coinage of Bengal - these articles cover the twelfth and thirteenth centuries - are of direct relevance. However, we shall analyse his other articles as well in so far as they illustrate Thomas's attitude towards Indo-Muslim history.

Thomas early concentrated on Indo-Muslim coins. Of 1949 coins he sold to the British Museum in 1850 nearly half belong

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[1] vide the membership lists of the JASB.
[2] For the location of Behat, see Prinsep's Essays, I, p. 73.
[3] Ibid, p. 78, f.n.1.
[4] Wilson, H.H. Ariana Antiqua, p. 434.

to the Indo-Muslim rulers.[1] The remaining half included the coins of Indo-Scythians, Bactrians, Muslim rulers of Ghaznavi and some provincial dynasties in India.[2]

That Thomas had selected Indo-Muslim numismatics quite early for a special study is established by a comparison of his first five articles published during his five years' stay in Britain. Out of these five articles through which Thomas made his debut in the world of numismatics, only 'On the coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan' was not prompted by any immediate stimulus to publication. 'On the coins of the Dynasty of the Hindu Kings of Kabul' was written because the publication in 1845 of Reinaud's Fragmens Arabes et Persans relatif a l'Inde made available certain information which could enable numismatists 'to fix both a kingdom and a date for a class of coins regarding the history of which much uncertainty has up to this time prevailed.'[3] Thomas proposed, on the basis of this information, to attribute a very extensive class of coins which was known to the numismatists.[4] His article on the coins of the Ghaznavi sultans published in 1848 was written primarily to describe coins as

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[1] British Museum Acquisition Registers (Coins and Medals), Vol. III, 1849-50, purchased on March 5,1850.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Thomas, E. 'On the coins of the Dynasty of the Hindu Kings of Kabul', JRAS, 1848, p. 177.

[4] Ibid, pp. 177-78.

'chanced' to form part of the Masson collection in the India House Library, London.[1] The subject of the 'Sah Kings of Surashtra' (Western Kshatraps) was particularly attractive following a discovery of a considerable number of coins of the dynasty at Junir,[2], some of which arrived in London during Thomas's stay.[3] His first article on the Pehlvi coins[4] - a field to which he was later to devote great attention - was prompted by the work of J. Olshausen on Pehlvi legends[5]. In 1848-49 Thomas had translated this work under the auspices of Professor H.H. Wilson for the Numismatic Chronicle.[6]

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[1]Thomas E. 'Supplementary Contributions to the Series of Coins of the Kings of Ghazni', JRAS, Vol. XVII (1860), p.138.

[2]These coins were discovered in August 1846.

[3]Thomas, E. 'On the Dynasty of the Sah Kings of Surashtra', JRAS, Vol. XII (1850), p.1, f.n. 2.

[4]'On the Pehlvi coins of the Early Mohammedan Arabs', JRAS, 1850, pp. 253-347.

[5]Olshausen, Justus, Die Pehlewi-Legenden auf den Münzen der letzten Sasaniden, auf den ältesten Münzen arabischer Chalifen, auf den Münzen der Ispehbed's von Taberista und auf indo-persischen Münzen des östlichen Iran, zum ersten Male gelesen und erklärt, Kopenhagen 1843.

[6]'On the Oriental Legends on certain Imperial Arsacidan and Partho-Persian coins', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XII (April 1849 - January 1850), pp. 68-77, 99-114. See also Thomas's 'The Pehlvi coins of the early Mohammedan Arabs', JRAS, Vol. XII (1850), p. 253, fn.

Olshausen had very little access to the numismatic cabinets of London and had, therefore, expressed a hope for the study and publication of the coin-collections of London. It was 'the desire of fulfilling his (Olshausen's) object' that Thomas undertook the examination of the Pehlvi coins of the early Muhammadan Arabs then available in London.[1]

Thomas focused his attention on the Indo-Muslim numismatics for two reasons. First, Indo-Muslim coinage then offered great scope for study. Second, his linguistic acquirements were suitable for working on Muslim history. In the eighteen-thirties and early forties when Thomas chose his special field of studies much work had been and was being done on Bactrian, Indo-Parthian and Indo-Scythian numismatics, subjects which could have been attractive for Thomas on account of his classical background. Charles Masson, James Prinsep, Wilson, A. Cunningham and some continental scholars were studying these subjects. Seeing that 'So many and such competent archaeologists were occupied in tracing out the records of Greek civilization in Central Asia', Thomas turned his attention to other subjects.[2] Moreover, the number of discoveries made in these fields of study was remarkable. New names and dynasties previously unknown or else known only by tradition

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[1] 'The Pehlvi Coins of the Early Mohammedan Arabs', JRAS, 1850, p. 253.

[2] Prinsep's Essays, I, p. 98.

were revealed.[1] The whole concept of Bactrian history was put on a new footing; the Kushanas became known for the first time. The Kanishka of tradition acquired historicity. The joint testimony of inscriptions and coins contributed greatly towards revealing the history of now well-known Gupta dynasty. It is important to bear in mind that although groupings and subdivisions, and not infrequently the chronology of the newly discovered rulers and dynasties remained yet to be definitely determined, to the contemporary mind of the mid-nineteenth century this field would appear nearly exhausted. Only occasional discoveries were anticipated in this field of numismatics.

On the contrary, Indo-Muslim numismatics had hardly made its debut as an academic study. H.H. Wilson in his Ariana Antiqua, to which Thomas himself had contributed several specimens of coins as material, had pointed out that 'for the coinage of the Mohammedan kings of Delhi we must seek for information in continental rather than in English publications. Marsden is the only exception; and his work, although of great merit and extent, is far from enabling us to dispense with the works of Fraehn and other eminent continental scholars.'[2] Fraehn specialised in Arabic (Cufic) coinage.[3] Only

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[1] Imam, Abu, op. cit., pp. 128-45.

[2] Ariana Antiqua, p. 27.

[3] Fraehn, Christianus Martinus, Recensio Numorum Muhammedanorum, Petropoli, 1826.

a very small portion of his work deals with Indo-Muslim coinage.[1] William Marsden's pioneer work[2] on Muslim coinage by its very nature as a general survey was inadequate on Indo-Muslim numismatics. In two volumes Marsden had covered Asia, Europe and Africa with India as only a small segment of the whole.

The comparatively unexplored field of Indo-Muslim numismatics was ideally suited to Thomas's linguistic abilities. His knowledge of Sanskrit was very limited.[3] Thus severely handicapping for any study of pre-Muslim Indian period. On the other hand, Thomas knew Persian and Urdu well besides having some knowledge of Arabic. At Haileybury he had won several prizes and a medal for his performance in the various language examinations.[4] In India he was given a medal for his performance in Persian at the Fort William College[5]. Thomas's ability in drawing and calligraphy was an additional asset to his

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[1] Ibid., pp. 446-56 besides a few scattered references.

[2] Numismata Orientala Illustrata: the Oriental coins, ancient and modern. 2 vols, London, 1823-25.

[3] Thomas, E. 'On the coins of the Gupta Dynasty', JASB, 1855, p. 484, f.n.2.

[4] Haileybury Examinations, J/1/98 - December, 1830,May, 1831, December 1831. In May 1832 he won a medal for his performance in Persian and prize for Arabic. See also, Haileybury: Copies of Students' Certificates, J/1/104 (1831-39), p.51 IOL.

[5] JASB, Vol. LV, Part I, Proceedings, p. 72.

numismatic studies.[1]

Thomas focused his attention on the Delhi sultans. It was much later in life that he became interested in the study of Mughal revenues. As we shall see later, his interest in the Mughal revenues grew out of his numismatic studies of the Sultanate period. His somewhat detailed note[2] on Akbar's coinage was also related to his chief interest, namely, the Sultanate numismatics. His interest in Akbar's coinage was due to his realisation that 'there are many details in the practical workings of his mints, of which we have an unusually full and complete record, under the hand of his minister, Abul Fazl, that specifically illustrate the antecedent developments of the coinages of his predecessors. His fiscal theories, whether in elaboration of pure revenue accounts, or the subordinate adjustments of scales and weights, confessedly followed local standards, and, as such, may be said essentially to belong to the prior period.'[3]

Thomas's use of the term Pathans for the sultanate rulers suggests why he concentrated on this period. He associated the Sultanate rulers with Afghanistan which was the centre

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[1] At Haileybury he won prizes for Devanagiri writing and drawing - vide Haileybury Examinations, J/1/98, May 1831 and May 1832. IOL.

[2] Pathan Kings, pp. 418-30.

[3] Ibid, p. 418.

of numismatic activities in eighteen-thirties and forties. Bactrian, Indo-Parthian and Indo-Scythian studies had brought into prominence central Asia and Afghanistan - the Ariana of classical writers. The Ariana Antiqua of Wilson was 'a Descriptive account of the antiquities and coins of Afghanistan'. He had brought his work down to Muslim times - 'The coins of the Mohammedan kings of Delhi, and their predecessors of Ghazni and Ghor, belong to an era subsequent to that which our series closes.'[1] Thomas's Pathan Kings is a sequel to Wilson's Ariana Antiqua. Indeed, in his first essay on the sultanate coinage Thomas points out that he was 'following the exact point of Indian history where Professor H.H. Wilson closes his labors in his Ariana Antiqua, he having brought down Indian numismatics from the time of Alexander the Great to the commencement of the Patan rule in Hindustan.'[2]

Thomas knew that the study of Muslim numismatics lacked the charm of the study of the coinage of the Bactrian successors of Alexander. In his article on the kings of Ghaznavi he points out that the subject 'possessed none of the classic interest attached to the survival of the Greek monarchies in

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[1] Ariana Antiqua, Preface, p. xi.

[2] On the Coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan, London, 1847, Preface, p. v.

Central Asia.'[1] Furthermore Muslim numismatology did not possess the kind of significance which archaeological studies possessed for ancient Indian history. In the absence of much literary evidence, archaeological remains were inevitably highly prized by historians as source-material for pre-Muslim Indian history. On the contrary, abundance of written sources deprived Muslim archaeological studies of such importance as similar studies for the earlier period enjoyed.

Thomas himself held - undoubtedly with ancient Indian history at the back of his mind - that 'in fulness of their (Muhammaden historians') narrations but little remains to be elucidated by collateral means.'[2] Nonetheless, he studied Sultanate coinage. His purpose was certainly to classify a suite of coins which had received but little attention from his predecessors. It was in consonance with his general academic intentions which permeate all his writings. As a rule he strongly believed that 'the general exposition of the available sources of knowledge necessarily comprised in any systematic approach to the subject, cannot fail to prove serviceable' to those who may hereafter pursue similar investigations.[3]

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[1] 'On the Coins of the Kings of Ghazni,' JRAS, Vol.IX (1848), p. 267. See also Prinsep's Essays, I, p. 178.

[2] On the Coins of the Kings of Ghazni', JRAS, IX, p. 267.

[3] 'On the Oriental legends on certain Imperial Arsacidan and Partho-Persian coins', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XII (1849-50), p.68.

Thomas's purpose in undertaking Indo-Muslim numismatics may be viewed against the contemporary ideas on the functions of archaeology in Europe. Lyell's ideas on geology had hardly penetrated archaeological studies[1]. Pre-historic archaeology was in embryonic stages. The main function of archaeology was thought to be to supplement and authenticate the story provided by written records. It is, therefore, hardly surprising to find Thomas seeing the verification of 'authentic history' as a 'more legitimate use' of archaeology.[2] No wonder he chose for his numismatic studies a comparatively unexplored field even though considerable written materials were available for the history of that period.

Indeed, in Thomas's considered opinion 'the history of Mohammedan nations is for many reasons peculiarly suitable for numismatic illustration.'[3] Unlike the coins of earlier

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[1] My ideas on the historiography of archaeology are derived from V.G. Childe's Piecing Together the Past (1956), Glyn Daniel's A Hundred Years of Archaeology (London 1950) and The Origins and Growth of Archaeology, (Pelican Books, 1967), and W.W. Taylor's A Study of Archaeology (Memoir 69 of the American Anthropological Association, 1948).

[2] 'On the Coins of the Kings of Ghazni' JRAS, Vol. IX, (1848), p. 267.

[3] On the Coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan, 1847, Preface, p. iii.

periods, medieval Muslim coins were not subject to much speculation and ambiguous interpretation. Medieval Muslim coins 'convey in simple words the precise information most prized by annalists: the name and title of the monarch, the city over which he ruled, and the fixed epoch of his sovereignty.'[1]

In Thomas's view numismatics performed twofold archaeological function, namely, 'the suggestive development of obscure tradition and the enlargement and critical revision of accepted history.'[2] It was in its latter archaeological function that numismatic studies were particularly relevant for Muslim history. To quote Thomas (he is writing in the context of Muslim history of Ghaznavi), 'though in the present instance scanty room is left for speculation founded on medals, these effectively fulfil their more legitimate archaeological use of verifying authentic history, and thus testing the comparative accuracy of the various writers on the subjects they illustrate whose works are now extant.'[3]

Thomas's first article on the Sultanate numismatics described and illustrated 125 coins. His 'Supplementary

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[1] 'On the Coins of the Kings of Ghazni', JRAS, Vol. IX (1848), p. 269. Also see loc. cit.

[2] 'The Initial Coinage of Bengal', JRAS, Vol. II (N.S.) 1866, p. 204.

[3] 'On the Coins of the Kings of Ghazni', ibid, Vol. IX, 1848, p. 267.

Contributions to the Series of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan' originally published at Delhi in 1851 and subsequently reprinted in the Numismatic Chronicle in 1853,[1] contained descriptions of 103 coins of the sultans and nine copper coins of Akbar. This essay was based chiefly on E.C. Bayley's coin-collection.[2] His successive researches on the subject finally appeared in the consolidated form of the Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Dehli (1871). Besides incorporating his earlier findings - published respectively in 1847 and 1851 - the Pathan Kings contains much new material. It gives in all a description of some 320 sultanate coins besides those belonging to contemporaneous regional kingdoms, especially Bengal. Scattered over the work are nearly fifty illustrations of coins besides 130 contained in six plates given at the end of the work.

Thomas's continuousattention to the subject progressively transformed and widened the nature and scope of his studies. He gradually came to regard numismatic studies in a much wider perspective than he did originally. In 1876 he confidently asserts that 'Numismatic studies I have always maintained, when properly and scientifically treated, open out

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[1] Vol. XV, pp. 121-80.

[2] Ibid.

a very large and expansive circle of investigation.[1]' As he delved deeper into the subject, the scope of his Indo-Muslim numismatics extended far beyond mere description and classification of coins. Looking back to his earlier writings on the Sultanate coinage as well as his long article 'On the Initial Coinage of Bengal' Thomas could see in 1871 that they 'were essentially technical and limited in their scope to antiquarian objects.'[2] Those writings were devoted chiefly to the description of coins. However, in the Pathan Kings, 'I have asserted my freedom from conventional trammels, and endeavoured to make Numismatics applicable in their larger and better sense to the many collateral questions they chance to touch.'[3] Thus, for instance, his Pathan Kings contains discussions on metrical and monetary systems, the relative value of gold and silver, and state resources at various times.

The extension of Thomas's range of interest undoubtedly owed to the appearance in Europe of historical studies on metrological and monetary systems. Thomas himself mentions

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[1] Records of the Gupta Dynasty illustrated by inscriptions, written history, local tradition and coins, 1876, p. 3.

[2] Pathan Kings, Preface, p.v.

[3] Loc. cit.

that M. Queipo's Essai sur les Systemes Metriques et Monetaires des anciens peuples (Paris, 1859), and more particularly R.S. Poole's article on the Babylonian and other early metrologies,[1] were attracting the attention of European archaeologists.[2] This recently aroused interest in the subject induced Thomas to write an article on ancient Indian weights. His purpose was to contribute by this 'parallel study' 'material and tangible evidence to check erroneous, or suitably aid and uphold sound theories.'[3] It is to be remarked that for Thomas this branch of studies was an off-shoot of his numismatic studies as coins were often measures of weight in India as Thomas himself was aware.[4] His curiosity thus aroused, influenced his Indo-numismatic studies. The extension of Thomas's original plan was made feasible by the progressive accumulation of source-material, both numismatic and literary. It was only in 1871 that he felt that the 'materials at present available suffice to determine with some accuracy the theoretical standards of the currency of the Pathan Sultans.'[5]

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[1] Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, London 1863, article 'Weights'.
[2] 'On Ancient Indian Weights', JASB, 1864, p. 251.
[3] 'On Ancient Indian Weights', JASB, 1864, p. 251.
[4] Pathan Kings, pp. 163-64.
[5] Ibid, p. 3.

For elucidating the numismatic history of the Sultans of Delhi Thomas endeavoured to gather collateral information.[1] He collected from various architectural remains - mostly in Delhi and surrounding areas - several inscriptions giving factual details regarding several rulers, and often their titles. He had prepared these inscriptions for publications in 1855, but he used them only in 1871 in the Pathan Kings.[2] Thomas's work of collecting and preparing inscriptions for his study was much facilitated by, and perhaps owed its very idea, to his association with Sayyid Ahmad Khan in Delhi where they came in continuous professional contact.[3] Official contact between the two led to close association in archaeological studies.[4] Sayyid Ahmad Khan helped Thomas in collecting and deciphering inscriptions.[5] His Asar-us-Sanadeed, an archaeological history of Delhi proved useful for Thomas. Furthermore, Thomas's desire to illustrate numismatic history by epigraphical remains may be in part due to the fact that similar work was being done for ancient Indian history.[6]

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[1] 'Supplementary Contributions to the Series of the coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan', Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XV (1853), p. 121.

[2] Pathan Kings, p. 20.

[3] Troll, Christian W. 'A Note on the Early topographical work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: Asar al-Sanadid' JRAS, 1972, p.139.

[4] Loc. cit., Pathan Kings, pp. 20, 136.

[5] Pathan Kings, pp. 20, 136 fn.1.

[6] Imam, Abu. op. cit., pp. 156-66.

He himself had used epigraphical evidence for ancient Indian history before he got interested in Indo-Muslim inscriptions.[1] Though inscriptional evidence enriched his Pathan Kings, it did not prove of any substantial help in illustrating numismatic history.

Persian histories were of great help where inscriptional evidence had fallen short of elucidating numismatic history. In 1847 when he first wrote on the subject of sultanate coinage, he relied on Firishta and Elphinstone for general historical information though he also made occasional use of the Tabaqat-i-Akbari. However, his own numismatic studies soon revealed Firishta's limitations as a source; the evidence of the sultanate period coinage was often at variance with Firishta's material and was, on chronological issues more reliable.[2] Moreoever, as he extended his researches he inevitably found Firishta and Elphinstone insufficient for his purpose. Elphinstone, the best general historian of India at the time, was very inadequate in the sultanate period. The whole of the period had been dealt in by him in only 92 pages and Firishta had formed his main source of information. Thomas was obliged to turn to contemporary or near contemporary Persian

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[1] See, for instance, his article 'The Sah Kings of Surashtna', JRAS, Vol. XII, 1850.

[2] On the Coins of the Patan Sultans, 1847, pp. 41, 52,56-57.

histories of the sultanate period of which he made a good use. In this he was helped and presumably encouraged by Elliot with whom he was in close official association soon after his return to India in 1849.[1] Our view is reinforced by the fact of Thomas's having made liberal use of Persian manuscripts in Elliot's extensive library for his 'Supplementary Contributions.'[2]

The inadequacy of the then histories of the sultanate period had a definite impact on the course of Thomas's later researches. In 1847 and 1851 his interest had centred on the numismatic study of this period. His historical sketches of the rulers were brief and subservient to the study of coinage. But we find a marked shift of emphasis in his Pathan Kings, prima facie evident both in the changed title and in its contents when published in 1871. What had begun as a booklet On the Coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan became the monograph The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Dehli, illustrated by coins, inscriptions, and other antiquarian remains. The historical portion of the work had become far more detailed and extensive than before. It is no longer based on Firishta and Elphinstone alone.

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[1]Thomas was assistant secretary in the civil department while Elliot was secretary in the foreign department. Both were with Dalhousie's camp in the Panjab.

[2]Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XV (1853), p. 139, f.n.3.

In the Pathan Kings 'the leading object' of Thomas was 'to collect materials for history'. [1] He sifted much contradictory and inconsistent testimony found in Persian histories,[2] traced the sources of information of later Persian chronicles for the history of early period.[3] He included in the form of footnotes in the Pathan Kings much research scattered in various journals and archaeological reports.[4] Indeed, the footnotes in his work are replete with information collected from many and varied sources. All this information was given in addition to the numismatic and epigraphic materials which formed the kernel of his work.

Although Thomas's main purpose was to collect materials, he produced a far more detailed history of the Sultanate period than had hitherto been possible. As was to be expected from a work which grew out of a study of coinage, by far the greatest portion of the Pathan Kings is occupied by numismatics. He traces the gradual development of Indo-Muslim coinage - its adaptive stages, crude execution, progressive refinement in execution, emergence of more varieties of coins. He brings down the gradual development of Indo-Muslim coinage to the times of Shir Shah.

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[1] Pathan Kings, Preface, p. viii.

[2] See, for example, pp. 266, fn.1, 336, fn. 1.

[3] See, for instance, pp. 33, 66n, 142 n, 178 n, 328-29, 331, 360 n.

[4] For instance, see pp. 60-61, 62, 65, 148.

The Pathan Kings also owed its importance to reasons other than its contribution to numismatic history. Even for purely political history it was superior in accuracy and wealth of information to all previous works on the subject. In this respect, the Pathan Kings derived its superiority from the use of hitherto untapped Persian sources and, of course, numismatic evidence. Thomas has drawn extensively from the Tabaqat-i-Nasiri of Minhaj us Siraj, Barani's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Shams al-din Siraj Afif's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Yahya ibn Ahmad Sirhindi's Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi besides making not an inconsiderable use of Hasan Nizami's Taj al-Maathir, Amir Khusrau's Qiran-us-Sa'dain, and the Khazain-ul-Futuh or Tarikh-i-Alai, Ibn Battuta, and Firoz Shah Tughlaq's Futuhat-i-Firozshahi. Of the works written in later times, Thomas has used the Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Ain-i-Akbari, Firishta and Tuhfat-ul-Kiram.

The use of the Tabaqat-i-Nasiri enabled Thomas to give more facts and more accurate chronology - albeit in tabular form - for the reigns of Iletmish and Nasir al-Din Muhammad than are to be found in Elphinstone. The use of Barani is seen to Thomas's advantage in his discussion of some administrative measures and regulation of prices by Alauddin. From Shams-i-Siraj Afif he derived fuller details of Firoz Tughlaq's reign. He gives from the Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi not only prices of several commodities, but also some details

of Firoz Shah's public works of which a fuller account is given from the Futuhat-i Firoz Shahi. The Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi accounts for a far fuller treatment of the successors of Firoz Tughlaq as well as of the Sayyids, who indeed had been summarily dismissed by Elphinstone in one page.

The use of these Persian sources influenced the contents of the Pathan Kings in yet another way. Thomas's interpretation of some of the events is coloured by the opinions of the Persian historians who formed his source of information. A telling example is the significance Thomas saw in Khusraw Khan's coming to power. He sees Khusraw Khan's reign as witnessing a revival of Hindu supremacy. For Thomas the 'leading point' of interest in the 'historical sense' in the reign of Khusraw Khan was 'the sudden and unanticipated re-establishment of Hindu supremacy and the temporary degradation of Muslim prestige'.[1] He has taken this view directly from Barani whose 'horror of Kurans desecrated and used as seats, and pulpits degraded into pedestals for Hindu idols' Thomas mentions specifically.[2] 'The Usurper', however, outwardly professed Islam.

Numismatic evidence, on the other hand, gave Thomas an

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[1] Pathan Kings, p. 183.

[2] Ibid., p. 184.

opportunity of forming opinions free from such bias as is to be found in the written sources. Indeed, this gave him a penetrating insight into some facets of Muslim rule in India. Through provincial currencies - especially from the nature of legends inscribed on such coins - Thomas discovered that the progress of Muslim rule in India was gradual, and in several instances it never pentrated beyond the surface of society. In this respect he found the Rajput coinage 'one of the most instructive series'.[1] He asserts that 'the incidental gradations of the Hindu legends on some of the provincial currencies illustrate in a curious degree the slow progress of the effective conquest of, or real submission by, the native dynasties, and occasionally disclose an inconveniently premature boast on the part of the historians of the invading race.'[2]

The rulers whose reigns saw substantial changes in coinage stand out prominently in a study primarily devoted to numismatics. For Thomas Muhammad bin Tughlaq is not merely an 'accentric'. No doubt Thomas gives Muhammad bin Tughlaq's then established image; he was 'generous to profusion, an accomplished scholar, abstinent, a stern defender of his faith, and the most experienced general of his day.'[3] With these

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[1] Pathan Kings, p. 54.

[2] Loc. cit.,

[3] Pathan Kings, p. 202.

qualities Muhammad bin Tughlaq combined 'a perversion of intellect' and 'want of mercy'.[1] However, it was 'in his role as a Prince of Moneyers' that Muhammad bin Tughlaq claimed Thomas's special attention.[2] Thomas appreciates his variegated coinage. His 'mintages are instructive both in the novelty and variety of their types, admirable in the artistic perfection of their design and execution.'[3] Similar considerations lay behind Thomas's great appreciation of Shir Shah whose reign he viewed as constituting an important landmark in the annals of Indian coinages.[4] Shir Shah corrected 'the progressive deteriorations' in the coinage of his predecessors and also introduced several improvements.[5] Foremost amongst Shir Shah's monetary improvements was the supercession of mixed metal coinage by unalloyed coinage.[6]

Thomas resented Akbar's eulogists' appropriation of Shir Shah's monetary improvements as the achievements of their master along with Shir Shah's reforms in revenue and fiscal matters.[7] He points out the need of 'doing justice to his

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[1] Pathan Kings, p. 202, 243.
[2] ibid, p. 206.
[3] Loc. cit.
[4] ibid, p. 403
[5] Loc. cit.,
[6] ibid, p. 404.
[7] ibid, p. 392.

(Shir Shah's) masterly administrative abilities, or in restoring to him the meed of honour for his systematization of the revenue and fiscal departments of Indian policy' for which credit had often been accorded to Akbar.[1] Hence, he concludes that the history of Shir Shah 'has yet to be written'.[2] Though Thomas himself does not use any new materials for the reign of Shir Shah, it is certain that his views on the subject are based, besides, of course, on the evidence afforded by coins, and on a knowledge of Afghan histories collected by Elliot. It is significant that Thomas underlines the consonance of his and Elliot's views on the subject: 'Sir Henry Elliot was likewises strongly impressed with the value of Shir Shah's reforms, regarding which we were quite in accord, and I have reason to believe he will be found to have collected much information on the subject.'[3]

However, Thomas never extended his researches to examine the revenue reforms of Shir Shah or Akbar. But he did study the revenue resources of the Mughals and published The Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire in India from A.D. 1593

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[1] Pathan Kings, p.392½

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Ibid, p. 392 fn.1. It may be pointed out that the fourth volume of Elliot and Dowson, which contained Afghan histories, had not appeared by the time Thomas wrote his above quoted remarks.

to A.D. 1707: A Supplement to the Chronicle of the Pathan Kings of Dehli in 1871. Though he does not include Babur in this booklet, it was Babur's revenues that initially attracted his attention; from his point of view Babur's revenues bore direct relevance to the metrology of the Delhi sultans.

While Erskine was discussing the question of Babur's revenues he had found it difficult to assign any definitive money value either in nineteenth century or sixteenth century terms to the figures for the total given in the Babur Namah.[1] He suggested that the nominal total of fifty-two krors could represent five several amounts ranging from £1,300,000 to 52,000,000 depending upon the nature and value of the coin in which the revenues were collected.[2] Thomas, with his knowledge of the coinage of the Sultans of Delhi ventured to tackle this problem. Part of the discussion centred on the comparison of the coinages of Delhi sultans and that of Akbar.[3]

Thomas's interest in the Mughal revenues is related to his study of the sultanate coins in yet another way. He viewed the coinage of the Delhi sultans as related solely to their metalurgical resources. This assumption, which is implicit throughout the Pathan Kings, comes out explicitly in his comments on the coins of Bahlul Lodi. He attributes the non-

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[1] House of Taimur, I, pp. 540-46.

[2] Ibid, p.542.

[3] Pathan Kings, pp. 387-90.

uttrance of higher coinage by Bahlul Lodi to Timur's having impoverished Delhi and the adjacent regions of its wealth.[1] This circumstance, Thomas writes, forced Bahlul Lodi 'to resort to the local copper mines for a new currency.'.[2] A knowledge of the state resources was, therefore, of direct relevance for Thomas's numismatic studies. For forming estimate of state resources, he had far more materials for the Mughal period than for the sultanate. This was undoubtedly why he adverted to Akbar's revenues in connection with 'the state resources of his predecessors.'[3]

However, contemporary political issues influenced the extension of Thomas's interest from Babur and Akbar to the whole of the Mughal period up to 1707 A.D. The annual budgetary deficiencies of the latter years of Lawrence's viceroyalty, levying of income-tax by Mayo and the consequent discontent amongst Indians provided the background for Thomas's decision to make a statistical study of the Mughal revenue down to Aurangzib's time. As 'the subject of Indian finance is just now attracting the serious attention of the English public', so wrote Thomas, 'I have thought it advisable to reproduce in full the information' on Mughal revenues - of which he had given a summary in the book - in the form of Appendix.[4]

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[1] Pathan Kings, p. 436.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Ibid., p. 431.

[4] Ibid., Appendix, p. 439.

The Appendix was soon to be superseded by the Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire which appeared within a few months of the publication of the Pathan Kings. It included 'much new matter which was necessarily omitted from the Appendix on the Revenues of the Mughals' in the Pathan Kings.[1] Besides 'the growing interest in the subject', it was, 'the surprise expressed at the amounts realized at these periods' that led Thomas 'to scrutinize more fully the available data.'[2]

The Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire is a booklet of 54 pages. In this Thomas touches briefly on the subject of methods of revenue assessment under Akbar.[3] But the main purpose of the work is to give a statistical account of the Mughal revenues from Persian histories and European travel literature. Thomas derives Akbar's revenues from the Ain-i Akbari and Tabaqat-i-Akbari and De Laët's De Imperio Magani, sive India vera. For the reign of Jahangir Thomas depends exclusively on the estimates given by European travellers, especially William Hawkins. The absence of the Iqbal nama-i Jahangiri of which a lithographical edition had been published in 1865, need not cause us any surprise. The Bibliotheca Indica edition of 1865 does not include the statistics culled

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[1] The Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire, Preface.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Ibid., p. 8-11.

by Irfan Habib from a rare manuscript of the work.[1] For Shah Jahan's revenues Thomas relies on the Badshahnamah of Abd-al Hamid Lahori. Aurangzib's revenue estimates are based on Dastur-al Amal-i Alamgiri, Bernier, Manucci (mediated through Catrou) and Ramusio as quoted in Harris's Voyages.

The chronology of the statistical tables in the Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire is not always accurate. This inaccuracy is due to the fact that Thomas has assigned to those statistical tables, which are not definitively dated, the dates when the works containing these statistics were compiled. This, as Professor Irfan Habib points out, is 'open to objection' since 'the tables might really have been long out of date when they were copied into our sources.'[2] Thus, for instance, on the basis of internal evidence the revenue figures in the Ain-i Akbari are to be assigned to the year 1580 A.D.[3] and not 1594 as suggested by Thomas.[4]

Thomas's chronology, based on European travel literature, is open to similar criticism. He takes the revenue figures in the travel literature to represent the period of travellers'

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[1]Habib, Irfan, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, Asia Publishing House, 1963, p. 419.

[2]Ibid, Appendix D, p. 395.

[3]Ibid, pp. 397-99.

[4]Revenue Resources, p. 54.

stay in India. Travellers' figures, like those of the Persian sources, often belong to earlier periods. For instance, Bernier's revenue figures are to be taken to refer to the reign of Shah Jahan and not to that of Aurangzib.[1]

Thomas has converted into rupees and sterling the figures given in dams in the Persian sources. For conversion into rupees he has used the ratio of 40:1, the rate of conversion given in the Ain-i Akbari. The adoption of this ratio for the entire period covered by Thomas makes his estimates in rupees untenable. The ratio of exchange between coins of different metals was determined by the market and not by the administration.[2] Since 'the coins circulated at values practically corresponding to their weights in the respective metals', the copper-silver ratio as fixed by Akbar became obsolete as the silver-price of copper rose during the seventeenth century.[3] Consequently, the estimates put forth in the Revenue Resources on the basis of a fixed rate of exchange cannot be accepted. Furthermore, computation into sterling of the rupee figures thus arrived at, according to an arbitrarily set rate of exchange[4] becomes doubly

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[1] Habib, I. Agrarian System, p. 397.

[2] Ibid, p. 380.

[3] Ibid, pp. 382, 387-91.

[4] Thomas converts rupees into sterling at the rate of two shillings to one rupee. Round figure was adopted for the sake of convenience.

objectionable.

Furthermore, later studies have made some of Thomas's conclusions on the metrology of the early sultans unacceptable. The researches of H. Nelson Wright and H.R. Nevill suggest that the tankah weighed 96 ratis or 172.8 grains and not 100 ratis or 175 grains as suggested by Thomas.[1] These authors have also contested Thomas's conclusions about the ratio of silver to gold and of copper to silver.[2]

A fundamental limitation of Thomas's studies is an almost complete absence of any attempt to use numismatic evidence for writing economic history. For instance, although he uses the external evidence of find-spots and hoard contents of the coins chiefly for inferring the extent of empires,[3] he is oblivious to the importance of such evidence for commercial history. Mints were indicative of 'the relative importance of the leading provincial cities', but he fails to relate the extension of mints to monetary economy.[4] Thomas shows indifference to coins which did not reveal factual details. His comments on early copper coins of the Arabs

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[1] Wright, H. Nelson, The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Dehli incorporating a Catalogue of the Coins in the author's cabinet now in the Dehli Museum, Delhi 1936, Appendix A, pp. 391-402.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] See, for instance, 'On the Coins of the Dynasty of the Hindu Kings of Kabul', JRAS, 1848, p. 182; 'On the Dynasty of the Sah Kings of Surashtra', ibid, Vol. XII, p.13.

[4] 'The Pehlvi Coins of the Early Mohammedan Arabs', ibid, Vol. XII, p. 259.

are very revealing. He writes, 'from the absence of any officer's name on their surfaces, consequent on the baser metal being allowed to go forth unadorned by the designation of the issuing, they (the copper coins) are destitute of the true historic value attached to higher coinages.[1]' (My italics).

Indeed, Thomas took a very narrow view of Indo-Muslim coinage. He held that the 'medals of Eastern kings, unlike the money of European nations, were really the coins of the sovereigns whose name they recorded; they were less the money of the country than a part of the wealth of the king himself.'[2] The ideas then current on oriental despotism, ideas which had come to be taken as stereotypes in European thinking on the East,[3] lay behind Thomas's view that Indo-Muslim coinage was too closely identified with the rulers. 'The despotism', he writes, 'enabled the rulers to alter at will the circulating medium of his dominions.'[4]

The fact that Thomas saw changes in the type, denomination and value of Indo-Muslim coins as solely dependent upon rulers'

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[1] JRAS, Vol. XII, p. 320.

[2] On the Coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan, 1847, Preface, pp. iii-iv.

[3] See, for instance, Romila Thapar's comments in her article 'Interpretations of Ancient Indian History', History and Theory, 1968, p. 322.

[4] On the Coins of the Patan Sultans of Hindustan, 1847, p.iv.

own estimate of their resources and how to employ them, blinded him to those political and economic considerations which greatly influenced the coinage of the period. John F. Richards has shown that the reasons for Bahlul Lodi's not having issued gold and silver coins was not the shortage of precious metals assumed by Thomas - an assumption in which Thomas was followed by Vincent Smith - but the changing politico- economic structure of the Sultanate.[1]

In justice to Thomas it must be pointed out that many of his conceptual limitations were the conceptual limitations of his time. In the absence of a general theoretical framework for the study of coinage for economic history, it is hardly surprising that Thomas could not correlate the developments in coinage to economic history. In fact, until late in the nineteenth century the principal value of numismatic studies was seen to consist in clearing doubtful chronology, in revealing political developments, genealogical data, religious ideas, mythologies, styles of art and developments in iconography. This is abundantly evident in various histories of coinages, the pages of the Numismatic Chronicle and above all the Coins and Medals: Their Place in History and Art, the first work of its kind to appear in English.[2] The numismatists

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[1] The Economic History of the Lodi Period: 1451-1526', The Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient, 1965, pp.47-67.

[2] It was written by the authors of the British Museum Official

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as well as economic historians -economic history itself was just making its appearance in historical writing[1] - were indifferent to the value of numismatic evidence for economic history. Thus, for instance, Sir. J. Evans, whose The Coins of the ancient Britons (1864) is still considered to be a standard work on the subject,[2] did not even pause to consider as to what caused the successive debasement of currency in his period or why copper coins were found in comparative abundance in certain districts. This was despite the fact that he makes use of written evidence pertaining to economic history for clarifying numismatic issues. Similarly, J.E. Thorold Rogers (1823-90), a pioneer economic historian in Britain, brings the evidence of prices and wages to bear upon the problems of monetary history[3], but nowhere in his work does

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Catalogues of coins under the editorship of Stanley Lane-Poole. It was published in 1885. See also the article 'Numismatics' in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1886 (9th ed.) Vol XVII, pp. 628-29.

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[1] See Ashley, W.J. 'On the study of Economic History', Surveys: Historic and Economic, London 1900, pp 1-30; Gras, N.S.B. 'The Rise and Development of Economic History', Economic History Review, Vol. I, 1927, 8, pp. 12-34.

[2] Grierson, Philip, Coins and Medals: A Select Bibliography (The Historical Association Series No. 56) 1954, p.28.

[3] A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, Oxford, 1864, Vol. I, pp. 175-6.

he call attention to the value of numismatic evidence for economic history.

However, we find that numismatists occasionally show awareness of the correlation of coins to the contemporary economic situation in general.[1] The latest findings in economic history lay behind the occasional perception by numismatists that coinage and general material conditions were related. In this respect the authors of the Coins and Medals reflect the influence of Rogers' A History of Agriculture and Prices in England (of which four volumes had appeared by 1885) which is referred to in their work.[2] The influence of Rogers is to be detected in the Pathan Kings, too.[3] Thomas's giving of information on the prices of provisions and the comparative cost of labour taken together with his references to the 'effective value' and 'purchasing power' of money,[4] sounds a faint echo of Rogers history of prices and wages which also includes some observations on the purchasing power of wages during his period.[5]

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[1] See, for instance, Evans, J. The Coins of the Ancient Britons, 1864, p. 156; Coins and Medals: Their Place in History and Art (ed. S. Lane-Poole), 1885, pp. 77, 119, 125-26.

[2] See p. 119.

[3] The first two volumes of Rogers' history had been published by 1871 when Thomas's work made its appearance.

[4] Pathan Kings, pp. 160, 223, 260, 428-30.

[5] Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices, 1866, Vol. I. pp. 682-94.

It must, however, be pointed out that Thomas has given the information on prices and wages without deducing any economic inferences from it. In the absence of a theoretical frame-work for studying the place of coins in the economic life of a people such deductions were very difficult to make. Moreover, there was the practical difficulty created by the absence of records of the workings of mints.[1] Not until very recently has use been made of numismatic evidence for the economic history of India.[2]

Despite such fundamental limitations the historiographical contribution of the Pathan Kings cannot be overrated. It gave a more detailed and accurate chronology for the history of the Sultanate period, collected a mass of materials from various

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[1]Where records of mints are not available to historians, theoretical framework for deducing the place of coins in the life of a people has still not been fully constituted. See, for instance, Metcalf, D.M. 'How Large was the Anglo-Saxon Currency?', The Economic History Review, Vol. XVIII (1965), pp.475 -82; Upendra Thakur, 'Economic Data from the Early Coins of India', The Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. XIV, 1971, pp. 269-73. See also, Philip Grierson's Numismatics and History' (Historical Association Series G19), 1951, pp 1-18.

[2]Upendra Thakur, 'Economic Data from the Early Coins of the Orient,' The Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. XIV, 1971, p. 273, See also R.S. Sharma's 'Coins and Problems of Early Economic History', Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Vol. XXXI, 1969, pp. 6-8.

sources, added new names to the then known list of Bengal rulers,[1] and, above all, made a great advance in the then knowledge of the sultanate coinage by carefully describing and classifying coins.

The fact that several of Thomas's conclusions have become untenable in the light of new materials does not detract from the value of his work. H. Nelson Wright who later challenged several of Thomas's conclusions himself paid tribute to Thomas in these words: 'No one can embark on a study of the coins of the Sultans of Dehli without being conscious of the great debt that he owes to Edward Thomas, the distinguished author of the Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Dehli. The fact that subsequent discovery of coins, unknown to and unsuspected by him, makes it impossible to accept many of his conclusions on the metrology of the series, cannot detract from the credit of his achievement'.[2]

The significance of the Pathan Kings is that it was the starting-point for subsequent work on the Sultanate coinage. Charles J. Rodgers, who made substantial additions to the subject in a series of articles in the form of 'Coins

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[1] From Blochmann to Stapleton Thomas's chronology of the Balbani kings of Bengal was generally accepted. Vide J.N. Sarkar's The History of Bengal: Muslim Period, Dacca, 1948, Vol. II, p. 77.

[2] The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Dehli, 1936, p.ix.

Supplementary to Thomas' Chronicles of the Pathan Kings',[1] began by publishing some coins which were not included in the Pathan Kings.[2] As he continued with his work on the subject, 'I found that incidentally my matter grew more interesting, and at last I found . . that I had more materials at hand' than he had initially anticipated.[3] Discovery of more materials resulted in Rodgers' third 'Supplement' to the Pathan Kings. Search of several private coin-collections yielded new specimens of coins and consequently more 'Supplements' were written by Rodgers. Simultaneously with Rodgers' 'Supplements' more and more coins were brought to light through the coin catalogues of various museums, journals of societies and other sundry publications,[4] which were published after Thomas's magnum opus. As H. Nelson Wright points out that in 1884 the British Museum possessed 642 coins of the sultanate series, the Catalogue of the Indian Museum cum Asiatic Society of Bengal Collection, published in 1907, recorded 899 coins, and in 1925 Lucknow Provincial Museum possessed 1045 coins. H. Nelson Wright himself possessed 1483 coins.[5] Thus, 'the

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[1] These articles appeared in the JASB Vol. XLIX (1880), pp. 81-86, 207-12; Vol. LII (1883) pp. 55-63; Vol. LV (1887), pp. 183-93; Vol. LXIII (1894), pp. 63-72; Vol. LXV (1896), pp. 213-19.

[2] JASB, Vol. XLIX (1880), p. 81.

[3] JASB, Vol. XLIX (1880), p. 207.

[4] Amongst those who contributed articles on the sultanate coinage to various journals are E.C. Bayley, H. Blochmann, J.G. Delmerick, J. Gibbs, W. Haig, A.F.R. Hoernle and

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material for the study of this series has increased very considerably since 1871', the date of Thomas's Pathan Kings.[1] Wright rightly felt the need of a new 'corpus' of the sultanate coins which would incorporate the materials contained in the Pathan Kings as well as collate and synthesize new finds scattered in various catalogues and journals. With the purpose of producing a new standard work on the subject, Wright published in 1936 The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Dehli. Thus, Thomas's Pathan Kings, which was regarded by a contemporary reviewer as 'the completion' of one branch of oriental studies,[2] proved to be only the end of the beginning.

The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Dehli finally rendered the Pathan Kings obsolescent but not obsolete. The work of the 'facile princeps'[3] was superseded but not without Thomas's having dominated the field for ninety years - from the time he wrote his first article on the subject in 1846 to 1936 when H.N. Wright's work was published.

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R.B. Whitehead - to mention only a few. For more details see C.R. Singhal's Bibliography of Indian Coins (Muhammadan and later series), Bombay, 1952, Part II, pp. 1-26.

[5] The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Dehli, Preface, pp. iii-iv.

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[1] Ibid, p.iv.

[2] Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XI (1871), p.67.

[3] Lane-Poole, S. Coins and Medals: Their Place in History and Art, 1885, p. 183.

James Talboys Wheeler

James Talboys Wheeler (1824-1897) was the first British writer to write a history of Muslim rule in India with an eye to the Indian Muslim community's contemporary political significance in the British-Indian scheme of things. Earlier historians had looked elsewhere. From this viewpoint then, Wheeler's work forms a distinctive land-mark in British historical writing on Muslim rule in India although in relation to his entire literary output what he wrote on medieval Muslim India is insignificant in quantity. Alone amongst our historians Wheeler never produced any separate monograph on the field.

Wheeler came from a lower middle-dass background in England. His father, James Luff Wheeler, was a bookseller at Oxford,[1] as was his maternal grandfather Alfonso Talboys.[2] From the fact that James Luff Wheeler left his wife and children a meagre legacy, it seems that his business was not very lucrative.[3] Without much money and a family of at least five children,[4] James Luff Wheeler presumably could

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[1] vide. James Luff Wheeler's will, 61/1863, Somerset House, London.

[2] DNB, Vol. LV, 1898.

[3] He left an estate of nearly £2000, vide will. no. 61/1863, Somerset House, London. No other legatees appear in the will.

[4] In James Luff Wheeler's will we find a mention of four sons other than James Talboys Wheeler.

not afford to give a good education to his children. That was perhaps why his eldest-born - James Talboys - did not go to a university.

Of Wheeler's early life we can catch only a few faint glimmerings. He was educated at an obscure public school[1] where presumably he learnt Greek (as a young man he wrote works on Herodotus, the first appeared in 1848). In the eighteen-forties he set up business as a publisher and book-seller at Cambridge.[2] He himself was the publisher of his first few books.[3] Wheeler's business, however, did not prove a success and early in the eighteen-fifties he was obliged to abandon it.[4] During the Crimean war he applied for, (successfully) a supernumerary clerkship at the war office.[5] Later he obtained a post at the Public Records Office.[6] In 1858 he went to India as the editor of the Madras Spectator.[7]

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[1] DNB, Vol. LX, p. 1351.

[2] Ibid, p. 1351.

[3] Thus, for instance, he published his An Analysis and Summary of Herodotus (1848), An Analysis and Summary of Thucydides (1850).

[4] DNB, Vol LX, p. 1351.

[5] Loc. cit.

[6] Private Secretary's Papers, no. 8803, Canning Papers, Public Library, Leeds.

[7] DNB, Vol. LX, p. 1351.

It has proved impossible to ascertain what precisely directed Wheeler's attention to India, but there is no doubt that he looked to India for better prospects in life and that his previous activities helped him to obtain the editorship of the Madras Spectator. Since 1848 he had been a text-book writer for university students. In 1848 he had written An Analysis and Summary of Herodotus. In 1849 appeared Wheeler's Analysis and Summary of the Old Testament followed by An Analysis and Summary of Thucydides (1850) and Analysis and Summary of the New Testament (1852). Having gained some literary reputation by his text-books, Wheeler by 1854 became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, the year in which appeared his first work which was more than a mere hand-book. This work was the Geography of Herodotus.[1] However, it must be pointed out that this somewhat elaborate work, too, was aimed at the needs of the student community. Wheeler writes that a 'want for such a work has long been felt both by the Classical and the Biblical Student.'[2] In 1855 appeared Wheeler's Life and Travels of Herodotus.

The publication of the Geography of Herodotus increased Wheeler's literary reputation. The work was well-received

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[1] The Geography of Herodotus, London 1854.

[2] ibid, Preface, p. viii.

by reviewers. As well as in some lesser-known journals, the work had favourable reviews in the Spectator and Athenaeum.[1] His increased literary reputation proved an asset to him in his selection as a supernumerary clerk at the War Office during the Crimean war.[2] The same asset presumably secured him the editorship of the Madras Spectator.

Arriving in India as the editor of the Madras Spectator, Wheeler soon found other avenues opened to him. In October 1858, within only a few months of his landing in Madras, he was appointed the Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic at the Madras Presidency College - the post having become vacant by the resignation of his predecessor in the middle of the academic year.[3] Wheeler's appointment seems to have been an act of desperation by the college authorities where the students' studies were reported to have suffered due to the sudden departure of the professor of Moral Philosophy.[4] With his experience of writing first text-books then two more elaborate works, Wheeler was apparently suitably qualified for teaching at the Presidency College

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[1] Spectator, 1855, p. 553; Athenaeum, 1854, pp. 1391-92.

[2] DNB, Vol. LX, p. 1351.

[3] Selections from the Records of the Madras Government No. LXIII Report on Public Instructions in the Madras Presidency for 1858-59, Madras 1859, p. 27.

[4] ibid, p. 27.

since the latter was more like a collegiate-school rather than a college for higher studies.[1] Here he taught Indian history, moral philosophy and logic.[2] Concurrently with holding this professorship, from May 1860 Wheeler was employed by the Madras Government to report on the preservation of the old records in the archives at Madras.[3] He compiled the Handbook to the Madras Records preserved in the Madras Government Office previous to 1831 with Chronological Annals of the Madras Presidency (1861) - a report 'highly commended' by the Secretary of State Sir Charles Wood.[4] In August 1861 he was employed by the Madras Government to write a report on the cotton cultivation in the Madras Presidency.[5] He completed this report in the beginning of 1862.

While still at Madras, Wheeler tried with success for a better post, this time with the Government of India.[6] In February 1862 he was appointed assistant secretary to the

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[1] Report on Public Instructions in the Madras Presidency for 1858-59, Madras 1859, pp. 21-22.

[2] Wheeler, A Short History of India and of the Frontier states of Afghanistan, Nipal, and Burma, London, 1880. Preface, p.vi.

[3] DNB, Vol. LX, p. 1351.

[4] Loc. cit.

[5] Handbook to the Cultivation in the Madras Presidency.

[6] Private Secretary's Papers, no. 8803, Canning Papers, Public Library, Leeds.

Government of India in the foreign department. Circumstantial evidence suggests that he was appointed to this post primarily to compile memoranda on various subjects relating to the work of this department. When Wheeler applied for service with the Government of India, he had emphasized his experience of having worked in the Public Records Office in England.[1] Then he had already done such work for the Madras Government. Also during his tenure of office as assistant secretary he prepared no less than seven memoranda[2], which were regarded as useful works of reference by the authorities; indeed they often find mention in Lord Mayo's Correspondence with the India Council.[3] It may be mentioned that the memorandum on the French in India was required by the government of India solely for the purposes of information.[4] As late as 1897

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[1] Private Secretary's Papers, no. 8893, Canning Papers, Public Library, Leeds.

[2] These are (i) Memorandum on the Sciende ameers, (ii) Memorandum on the French Settlements in India, (iii) Memorandum on the Afghan Frontiers, (iv) Supplementary Memorandum on the Beloochistan and Persian Frontier, (v) Memorandum on the Wahabees, (vi) Memorandum on Persian Affairs with a Supplementary Note on the Turkomans, Char Eimaks, and Seistan, (vii) Report on Afghan-Turkestan. These memoranda and reports are printed but not published.

[3] See, for instance, Mayo Papers, Mayo's letter of 22nd March 1869 to the Duke of Argyll, Add. 7490/35, letter no. 38; Mayo's letter of Sept. 1869 to Sir Henry (Rawlinson), Add. 7490/36, letter no. 227. Cambridge University Library.

[4] Memorandum on the French Settlements in India, 1866, p.35.

the reports and memoranda prepared by Wheeler were 'still included among official works of reference.'[1]

In 1870 Wheeler was transferred to Rangoon as secretary to the Chief Commissioner of British Burma. The fact that Mayo transferred Wheeler to Rangoon at a time when France was expanding its sphere of trade and influence in the region and consequently competition and rivalry was developing between the British and French,[2] may be taken as reflecting Mayo's confidence in Wheeler's abilities. In November 1870 Wheeler visited Mandalay and Bhamo on a semi-political mission and had an interview with the king of Mandalay, who was trying to balance British influence in the region by a dalliance with the French.[3] Major General Albert Fytche, the Chief Commissioner of Burma, in a letter to the Government of India - the letter is reproduced in Wheeler's Voyage to Irrawady - appreciated Wheeler's 'tact and discretion' in his interview with the king of Mandalay.[4]

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[1] Wheeler's obituary notice, The Times, January 14 1897, p.6.

[2] Donnison, F.S.V. Burma (Nations of the World Series), London, 1970, pp. 60-61; Christian, J.L. Modern Burma: A Survey of Political and Economic Development, University of California Press, 1942, pp. 46-47.

[3] Loc. cit.

[4] Wheeler, J. Talboys, Journal of a Voyage up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay and Bhamo, Rangoon 1871, Appendix pp. i-ii.

After three years' stay in Burma, Wheeler went in 1873 on a long furlough to Britain to return to India in 1876.[1] On his return to India he was employed to report on the records in the home and foreign departments at Calcutta.[2] In 1880-81 he again visited England.[3] He retired from the unconvenanted service in 1891.[4] His services to the government were reported to have been appreciated by successive viceroys of India.[5] After returning to Britain Wheeler seems to have led a retired life. He did not even resume his membership of the Royal Asiatic Society of which he had been a non-resident member between 1868 and 1883.[6] He died at Ramsgate in January 1897.[7]

The character of Wheeler's life in India was thus very different from that of the other scholars included in this study. His earliest, and perhaps the only continuous contact with Indians was with young men from middle-class families studying at the Madras Presidency College the

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[1] DNB, Vol. LX, p. 1351.

[2] Ibid, p. 1352.

[3] The preface of Wheeler's Short History of India (1880), and that of the Tales from Indian History (1881) were written from Witham, Essex.

[4] DNB, Vol. LX, p. 1352.

[5] 'Obituary notice', The Times, January 14, 1897.

[6] vide the lists of members in the JRAS for those years.

[7] DNB, Vol. LX, p. 1352; The Times, January 14, 1897, p.6.

majority of whom came from Hindu families.[1] Wheeler's experiences later were confined to a high offical level. Unlike Elliot, Thomas and Keene, Wheeler never worked in a district. As a result he rarely came in direct contact with Indians outside the class room. Therefore, his personal knowledge of India was very limited.[2] Furthermore, Wheeler is remarkable for being the only one of our historians who did not know any Indian language.

During his stay in India Wheeler wrote several books. The first of these was the Madras in the Olden Times (1860-62) in three volumes.[3] The Hand-book to the Madras Records, as already noticed came out in 1861.[4] In 1867 appeared the first of the four volumes of Wheeler's The History of India from the Earliest Ages,[5] which was completed fourteen years

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[1] Selections from the Records of the Madras Government, no. LXIII. Report on Public Instructions in the Madras Presidency, Appendix A.

[2] Prof. Romila Thapar is mistaken in believing that Wheeler was intimately concerned with rural administration in India - 'Interpretation of Ancient Indian History', History and Theory, 1968, p. 323.

[3] Madras in the Olden Times: Being a History of the Presidency from the first foundation of Fort. St. George, 3 vols., Madras, 1860-62.

[4] Hand-book to the Madras Records: Being a Report on the Public Records preserved in the Madras Government Office, previous to 1834, Madras 1861.

[5] It was published by Trübner & Co., London. The second volume was published in 1869, the third in 1874 and the fourth in two parts in 1876 and 1881 respectively.

later in 1881. In 1868 he published the Adventures of a Tourist for private circulation. In 1869 he brought out a Summary of Affairs of the Government of India from 1864 to 1869. In 1871, after his semi-official visit to Mandalay and Bhamo, he published a Journal of a Voyage up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay and Bhamo. The year 1877 saw the publication of two of Wheeler's works, namely, Early Records of British India and the History of Imperial Assemblage at Delhi. A year later he published a Summary of Affairs in Mahratte States, 1627-1858. In 1880 he published his Short History of India.[1] In 1881 came out the Tales from Indian History[2] and in 1886 India Under British Rule. His last work to be published was a College History of India: Asiatic and European.

For our present purposes, only the fourth volume of the History of India and the Muslim portions of Wheeler's other histories are of direct relevance. However, we shall be drawing from his other writings in so far as they shed light on his attitude and approach towards Muslim rule in India. The first three volumes of the History of India

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[1] A Short History of India and of the frontier States of Afghanistan, Nipal and Burma, London: Macmillan & Co., 1880. Henceforth this work will be cited as Short History of India.

[2] Tales from Indian History: Being the Annals of India retold in Narratives, London 1881

which deal with the history of Hindus in India are very significant in this context. Indeed, it is only by contrasting the treatment in Wheeler of Muslim and Hindu periods that we gain a proper understanding of Wheeler's underlying assumptions, prepossessions and purposes in his study of Muslim rule in India.

At first, Wheeler devoted himself to writing on the history of India in order to further his literary ambitions, but his later commitment was fed, sustained and defined by practical considerations. His first work relating to the history of India - Madras in the Olden Times - was the result of curiosity and literary ambition. While preparing a report on the records at the government office in Madras Wheeler 'necessarily became familiar more or less with the whole of the Records.'[1] He decided to extract materials from the official Madras records illustrative of the early history of Madras. The result was the Madras in the Olden Times. Wheeler's interest in the subject had been powerfully excited when in 1859 one Mr. Hudleston[2] had presented before the Literary Society of Madras a few extracts from the earliest records at Madras.[3] Wheeler writes that the

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[1] Madras in the Olden Times, Vol. I, Preface, p.iv.

[2] Wheeler mentions that Mr. Hudleston was the Sub-Treasurer of the Board of Revenue at Madras in 1861 - Madras in the Olden Times, I, p.iii.

[3] Loc. cit.

extracts presented by Hudleston 'disclosed a state of society so curious and interesting, that all who heard them were anxious that they should be continued.'[1] The favourable circumstances of his official position enabled Wheeler to take up a subject which had excited curiosity and interest in Madras literary circles.

Madras in the Olden Times traversed the years 1639-1748 'so as to fill up the blank which has hitherto existed in the history of the English settlement, between the first foundation of Fort St. George and the period when Mr. Orme's history may be said to begin.'[2] Madras in the Olden Times was favourably reviewed. It was regarded as a 'valuable contribution' to Indian history.[3] The reviewer in the Madras Observer (March 4, 1861) observed, 'we must confess we did not imagine that old Madras could have furnished anything so interesting ... Madras has reason to be grateful for the labours of Mr. Wheeler.'

The success of Madras in the Olden Times encouraged Wheeler to plan, (after the same model) a history of India in the nineteenth centuries. Early in 1862 he wrote that, 'India as it was in the days of Clive and Hastings, Hyder and Tippoo, of Coote and Wellington, of Cornwallis and

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[1] Madras in the Olden Times, I, p.iii-iv.

[2] ibid, p.v.

[3] Examiner, March 2, 1861.

Mornington, is almost a blank so far as a living narrative of the time is concerned.'[1] In his view the 'politician, the moralist, and the military annalist have done their best, but it still remains for the antiquarian to exhume from the records of the time, the story of that eventful period written by the hands of the actors themselves.'[2]

Wheeler's planned history of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century India never came to fruition. He soon abandoned his intention in favour of undertaking a general history of India. Wheeler's change of plan was prompted by practical considerations which were directly related to his new official situation. He now needed for success in his duties a better knowledge of the Indian past. Soon after assuming his duties in the foreign department, Wheeler became 'astounded at his own ignorance' of the history of India.[3] His knowledge of Indian history in 1862 was indeed superfidal despite the fact that he had taught Indian history in the Madras Presidency College. The basic text-book at the college was Henry Morris' elementary History of India,[4] which gave only a broad outline of Indian history with main emphasis on British rule. At Madras Wheeler 'had learnt something of Clive and Hastings,

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[1] Madras in the Olden Times, Vol. II, Preface, p.vi (my italics).

[2] Loc. cit. (my italics)

[3] Short History of India, Preface, p.vi.

[4] Selections from The Records of the Madras Government, No.LXIII. Report on Public Instructions in the Madras Presidency, 1859, Appendix.

of the Moghuls, Mahrattas, and the Marquis of Wellesley, but of the history of India and its civilisation .. he found he knew nothing'.[1] Wheeler, 'having sounded the depth of his ignorance .. lost no opportunity, official or literary, to perfect his knowledge of Indian history.'[2]

Wheeler was, of course, familiar with the works of Mill, Elphinstone, Grant Duff, Bruce, Briggs and Dow to whom he refers specifically in his Madras in the Olden Times.[3] But these historians were inadequate for his purpose which was to understand the ideas and aspirations of the Indian people themselves, in the eighteen-sixties - 'as they are' and as they 'think and act'.[4] For him a study of the Indian past was essential for 'a due apprehension' of 'more recent periods'.[5] Indeed, Wheeler thought that Europeans could comprehend the modern Hindu culture only through their history.[6]

Wheeler believed that the dominating force in Indian society was religion. Amongst Hindus, 'and indeed amongst

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[1] Short History of India, Preface, p.vi.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Vol. I, Preface, p.v.
[4] History of India, II, pp. 409 fn.1, 660.
[5] Ibid, p.409 fn.1.
[6] Ibid, pp. 660-61.

oriental nations generally, religion is their only conception of patriotism.'[1] Amongst the Hindus, specifically, relgion defined and influenced all their actions. In their minds 'so closely has every act and duty been associated from time immemorial with religious beliefs' that to understand their 'ideas and aspirations' it was essential to study their religious beliefs.[2] This could be done best in an historical context.

Wheeler's experiences as an official at the centre of the British administration in the eighteen-sixties is of the utmost significance in explaining this stress upon religion as the dominant feature of Indian society. But there are three other factors which may have contributed to Wheeler's great emphasis on religion. First, Wheeler grew up in Oxford and Cambridge in the eighteen-thirties and forties when new religious fervour ran through the universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the so-called Oxford movement. It was the time when theology was attempting to assert itself against the offensive of rationalism in Britain.[3] A.H.L. Heeren's Historical Researches into the Politics, Intercourse, and Trade of the Principal Nations of Antiquity seems to have been another source of Wheeler's

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[1] History of India, III, p.2.

[2] ibid, I, Preface, p.vi, Vol. II, p.410.

[3] See A.W. Benn's History of English Rationalism, I, pp. 326-67.

conviction of the predominance of religion in eastern society. Heeren saw 'intimate connection .. among oriental nations, between religion, laws, and science,'[1] Furthermore he saw 'indissoluble' connection between religion and philosophy, religion and literature and religion and art and architecture in India.[2] It is significant that Wheeler was familiar with this work of Heeren; he had used it extensively for his work on Herodotus.[3] It is worth pointing out that Heeren's works including Historical Researches had been translated by Wheeler's grandfather A. Talboys. Though the works of W. Jones, Colebrooke, Wilson and John Muir on Sanskrit literature and on Hindus in general pointed to religion as the dominant force in Hindus society, it is improbable that they influenced Wheeler's ideas at the outset. In view of his very limited knowledge of Indian history, it is improbable that Wheeler was directly familiar with the works of Jones, Colebrook and Wilson when soon after his arrival in Calcutta in 1862 he was interested in the Bhagvat Gita for historical purposes.[4]

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[1] Heeren, A.H.L. Historical Researches into the Politics, Intercourse, and Trade of the Principal Nations of Antiquity, Asiatic Nations: Indians, Oxford 1833 (tr. by A. Talboys), Vol. III, p. 145.

[2] ibid, pp. 65-66, 82, 145, 152, 153-54, 233, 243, and passim.

[3] The Geography of Herodotus, 1854, 182, 183, 186, 188, 189, 267, 270, 293 and passim.

[4] History of India, I, Preface, p.vii, fn.1.

Wheeler's experiences in Madras contributed further to his conviction that religion was the most dominant force in Indian society. Mappilla[1] uprisings in the Malabar region and caste disputes in Madras no doubt affected his ideas. The Mappilla uprisings in the eighteen-forties and fifties had the appearance of being motivated by religious fanaticism, and Wheeler was familiar with these uprisings which he includes in the 'Chronological Annals of the British Government at Madras' in his report on the Public Records in the Madras Government office.[2] Frequent caste disputes in Madras, the history of which Wheeler knew through official records,[3] undoubtedly contributed to Wheeler's great stress upon religion as the dominant feature of Indian society.

However, the most direct and decisive influence on Wheeler undoubtedly came from his close association with the government of India at a time of inflamed political, racial and religious passions in the eighteen-sixties. He came to India immediately after the events of 1857-58 and became closely associated with the Government of India in the eighteen-sixties when the memory of British rule having been

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[1] The Principal Muslim Community in Malabar.

[2] Hand-book to the Madras Records, 1861, pp. xxiv, xxvi, xxvii.

[3] Madras in the Olden Times, Vol. II, pp. 227-30, 302, Vol. III, pp. 93, 95, 109-110 and passim.

shaken to its foundations in India was still very fresh and when the Muslim community was still deeply suspected. In high official circles it was believed that quasi-religious causes were behind the upheaval of 1857-1858. Wheeler himself ascribes 'the mutiny' in the army which triggered off the revolt of 1857-58 to the greased cartridges and to the fear amongst the sepoys that the British government were trying to convert them to Christianity.[1] The interpretation of '1857-58' as brought about by quasi-religious causes fostered a belief amongst Britons that 'a twin fanaticism of caste and Islam' could pose a challenge to British rule in India.[2] As a result of this conviction the British government looked upon all Indian religious manifestations with suspicion. Hence for a man like Wheeler,without, as we have seen, an intimate knowledge of India outside the classroom, membership of the central secretariat of the Government of India the atmosphere of wariness and suspicion towards all Indian religious phenomena was bound to make a profound impression.

Wheeler's periodization of Indian history expresses his conviction that religion is the chief force in Indian life and society. He divides Indian history into epochs defined

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[1] Tales from Indian History, pp. 230-31, 243.

[2] Hardy, P. The Muslims of British India, Cambridge 1972, p.89.

by the predominant religious beliefs which he considered to have prevailed during those epochs. The history of the Hindus is divided into four epochs: the Vedic, Brahmanic, Buddhist and the Brahmanic revival. He, of course, found it difficult to assign any definitive chronological framework to these epochs. The Vedic age, the earliest period, was followed by Brahmanism which, in Wheeler's view, lasted up to c. 600 B.C. The Buddhist era covered the period from c. 600 B.C. to 800-1000 A.D. The Brahmanic revival dates from the disappearance of Buddhism till 'the present time'.[1] Wheeler, however, guards against any rigorous distinction between these epochs; he writes that they overlapped each other and were marked by the intermingling of various religious ideas.[2]

The 'Brahmanic revival' was going on he claimed throughout the whole period of Muslim rule in India. Wheeler divided this period, so far as the Muslims in India were concerned, into four distinct phases - the Sunni, Shiah, Sufi and a final Sunni revival. The first found expression in the period from the eleventh to the fourteenth century; the Shiah period began with the Muslim conquest of the Deccan in the fourteenth century and lasted until the sixteenth century. The Sufi

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[1] History of India, II, p. 418.

[2] ibid, p. 419

period opens at the time of the Mughal invasion of India and covers the reigns of Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Aurangzib's reign saw the revival of Sunni Islam.[1] In the eighteenth century the British appeared on the scene. Both Hinduism and Islam 'overlapped the British era.'[2]

Given religion was the basis of Wheeler's periodization of Indian history, it might be thought that his chief interest was in tracing the history of religion itself in India. However, this would be an erroneous notion. Wheeler never aimed at studying the history of religious ideas in India.[3] Indeed, he studiously left religious controversies to the students of theology.[4] His primary purpose was to study 'the civilization and institutions of the people.'[5]

Wheeler hoped to obtain 'a tolerably clear insight into the important changes which have taken place at different intervals in the manners and ideas of the people at large (i.e. the Hindus)' by studying 'the religious books which have been preserved.'[6] This was so because he saw 'every act and duty' of Hindus entwined 'from time immemorial with

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[1] History of India, IV, Part I, Preface, pp. ix-x.
[2] ibid, III, p.1.
[3] ibid, I, p.vi.
[4] ibid, IV, p.3.
[5] ibid, I, p.vi.
[6] ibid, II, p.410.

religious belief.'[1] With this purpose in mind he turned to the two great Hindu epics - the Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Wheeler regards these epics as texts representing the ideas and beliefs of Hindus. For him the Vedas and Puranas were chiefly of 'a theological character'.[2] Nonetheless, 'some knowledge of the Vedic hymns and especially of the laws of Manu, is essentially needful to a right understanding of Vedic and Brahmaic India.[3] But the Vedas and Puranas were auxiliary to Wheeler's study of the Mahabharata and Ramayana.[4]

The Mahabharata and Ramayana were 'reflex of the Hindu world.'[5] Wheeler emphasized that:

> 'A familiarity with these two poems is as indispensable to a knowledge of Hindus, as a familiarity with the Old Testament is indispensable for a knowledge of the Jews. They form the great national treasuries out of which the bards have borrowed the stories of their ballads, the eulogists and genealogists have taken the materials for their so-called histories, and the later Brahmans have drawn the subject-matter of their religious discourses and the ground work of their moral teaching; whilst nearly every plot in a Hindu drama, or sculptured group in a Hindu pagoda, refers to some character or scene belonging to one or other of these famous poems.'[6]

These epics had thus exerted a vast influence on

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[1] History of India, II, p. 410.

[2] Ibid, III, p. viii,fn.2.

[3] Ibid, p. vii.

[4] See, for instance, Wheeler's comments in the History of India, I, pp. 6-7.

[5] Ibid, p.3.

[6] Ibid, I, pp. 3-4.

the Hindu masses - 'more universal than the influence of the Bible upon modern Europe.'[1]

In allowing the epics a pervasive influence on Hindu culture, Wheeler was following the gradually accumulating evidence which formed the basis of Heeren's conviction that the two great epics had exerted 'powerful influence' upon 'the popular religion, upon arts, and other branches of poetry - in one word upon the whole civilization and intellectual development of the nation itself.'[2] Thus, for instance, Langlès' Monumens de l'Inde, Chambers' articles in the Asiatick Researches, Wilson's researches into the classical Hindu drama, Polier's Mythologie des Indous all point towards the pervasive influence of the Ramayana and Mahabharata on Hindu art, literature and popular religion.

Wheeler's assumption that a study of the Mahabharata and Ramayana would reveal the history of Hindu civilization may be questionable, but not so the technique he employed for this study. He was well aware that the composition of the epics dated from a period much later than that of the occurrence of the chief events described in them. To

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[1] History of India, I, p.4.

[2] Historical Researches into the politics, intercourse, and trade of the Principal nations of antiquity, Asiatic nations: India, Oxford 1833 (tr. by A. Talboys) Vol. III. pp. 204-05. See also pp. 60, 62, 136, 139, 233-34.

quote him:

> 'The leading events belong to one age; the poem belongs to another and a later period. In other words, the Mahabharata and Ramayana were not composed in their present form until a period long after that in which the heroes of the two poems lived and died .. this chronological interval could scarely have been less than one or two thousand years.'[1]

Consequently the epics came to acquire a variety of interpolations, which exhibited 'a complicated intertwining of tradition and fables referring to widely different periods, races and religions.'[2] The events of one age thus became coloured by the ideas of another.[3]

Wheeler considered that the chief events of the Mahabharata and Ramayana belonged to the Vedic age and the interpolations to the Brahmanic.[4] He proposed, by internal and external criticism, to sift the Vedic from the Brahmanic. The separation of the Vedic and Brahmanic elements in the two epics, he hoped, would reveal how the Vedic became the Brahmanic period. The tests of reference for separating the ideas and institutions of the two periods

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[1] History of India, I, p.5.
[2] Ibid, p.3.
[3] Ibid, p.5.
[4] Ibid, p.6.

were furnished by the hymns of the Rig Veda and the Laws of Manu, by then available in English translations. Wheeler rightly considered the hymns of the Rig Veda as 'the most authoritative expression' of the Vedic age and the laws of Manu for that of the Brahmanic.[1]

Wheeler derived his sophisticated approach to the study of the Mahabharata and Ramayana from the work of Niebuhr, Thirlwall and specifically Grote. B.G. Niebuhr (1776-1831) had applied scientific criticism to early Roman tradition and legend. His History of Rome (1811-32) had made a serious attempt to disentangle the true from the fictional in the ancient Roman tradition. Connop Thirlwall (1797-1875), whose History of Greece appeared over the period 1835 to 1847 was a pioneer of critical historiography of antiquity in Britain.[2] Wheeler was familiar with the works of both Niebuhr and Thirlwall; he had studied them for his works on Herodotus.[3] However, circumstantial evidence suggests that George Grote (1794-1871) exerted a more immediate influence on Wheeler's approach to the study of the Hindu epics. It is significant that Wheeler referred to the work of Grote in justification of his own study of

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[1] History of India, II, Introduction, p. lxxxvi.

[2] Thompson, History of Historical Writing, II, p. 489.

[3] Geography of Herodotus, 1854, Preface, p. vi. and passim.

the Mahabharata and Ramayana.[1] One of the two distinguishing features of Grote's History of Greece was his treatment of the legendary period. Grote had displayed a marked scepticism towards Greek legend, and had not accepted Greek mythology as historical proof. He had, nonetheless, accepted it as a reflection of the Greek mind. Wheeler's views on the Hindu eepics are reminiscent of, and presumably derived from, Grote's ideas on the legendary and mythological accounts of Greek history.

Wheeler was very conscious that the Mahabharata and Ramayana, even bereft of interpolations, could not be accepted as they stood as accurate history. Even a critical digest of these epics would not yield materials which could be reduced to a coherent chronological framework.[2] Nevertheless, the epics were invaluable as a source of history; they revealed the state of Hindu society at two widely separated points of time. From this view-point the interpolations also assumed significance; they disclosed the mind of the age in which the interpolations occurred.[3]

Wheeler's general conception of history was in consonance with his approach to the Hindu epics. History for him was no mere chronicle. His considered view was that 'the name

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[1] History of India, III, p. viii, fn. 3.
[2] Ibid, II, pp. 619-20.
[3] Ibid, I, pp. 106-07.

of history had been often improperly applied' to 'the narratives of migrations, wars, and court intrigues.'[1] It's wide scope extended to 'infinitely more valuable' study of the ideas and institutions of different societies.[2] Thus, although for ancient Indian history Wheeler despaired that 'there was no vista of the past carrying the mind back by successive stages to the glimmer of legend',[3] he was able nevertheless to distinguish, with some success, the ideas and institutions of the Vedic Aryans from those of the people of the Brahmanic society. Wheeler found that the two epochs were marked by different political, social, and religious ideas and institutions.[4]

In sharp contrast to his wide concept of history and the scope of his 'Hindu history', Wheeler's studies of Muslim India are primarily limited to political history. Only one-fifth of his account of Muslim history in India is devoted to 'civilisation'.[5] Even in this portion he gives considerable attention to political subjects.[6] Within the context of political history itself, the scope of Wheeler's

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[1] History of India, II, p. 625.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Ibid, p. 619.
[4] See ibid, II, Part V, and Vol. III, pp. 18-63.
[5] Ibid, IV, Pp. 416-523.
[6] See, for instance, pp. 430-31, 438-44, 449-50, 457-59, 477-79, 482, 484-85, 498-504, 509-10, ibid.

Muslim studies is very narrow. There is a complete absence, for example, of any study of political institutions. This omission is remarkable if seen against the background of his attempt, howsoever inadequate it was, to understand the political system of the Hindus.[1] He is altogether indifferent to any economic policies pursued by Muslim rulers. It is significant to note that Alauddin's economic measures find only a cursory mention in Wheeler's work despite the fact that some materials on the subject had been made available in English by Elliot, Dowson and Colvin. Wheeler's indifference to the revenue administration of the Mughals is still more conspicuous. The translation and annotation of the Ain-i-Akbari by Professor Blochmann in 1873 had put the knowledge of the subject on a new footing. But such matters were beyond Wheeler's ken. For his Indo-Muslim history he concentrated on wars, revolts, court intrigues and scandals.

Besides the conspicuous dissimilarity in the themetic content of Wheeler's treatment of the Hindu and Muslim periods, there is yet another fundamental difference in his treatment of the two periods. For the Hindu period Wheeler adopts a critical approach towards his sources, notably as has been seen towards the Mahabharata and Ramayana. He

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[1] History of India, II, pp. 586-618.

was sceptical too about the literal accuracy of Buddhist sources of history.[1] But in significant contrast he accepts without much historical criticism the testimony of European travellers on Mughal India. Indeed, he exhibits an infatuated attitude towards European travel literature in general which forms the main evidential basis of his Mughal history. Thus, for instance, he accepts Manucci's account of Aurangzib's India as mediated through Catrou without even raising the possibility that Catrou tampered with Manucci's materials. Wheeler neglects even the rudiments of historical criticism; he makes no distinction between the observations based on personal experience and those derived from second-hand knowledge or hearsay. Indeed, the testimony of European travellers is accepted without any attempt to ascertain the sources of their information. Wheeler's use of Herbert and Bernier's travels may be taken as examples of his uncritical attitude towards travel literature on Mughal India. He unhesitatingly accepts Herbert's observations on Mughal history regardless of the fact that Herbert's experiences were confined to the periphery of the Mughal empire. He easily accepts Bernier's account of Jahangir without taking into account the fact that Bernier's knowledge of Jahangir's reign was at best second- hand. (Bernier was in

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[1] History of India, III, pp. 474-88.

India from c.1659 to 1667).

There is yet another noticeable difference in Wheeler's studies of the Hindu and Muslim periods of Indian history. His knowledge of the sources and contemporary scholarship on the Hindu period was far superior to that of the Muslim period. For the Hindu period his knowledge was kept up-to-date. Thus, for instance, for his History of India he used Rev. D.C. Boyd's translation of A. Weber's work on the Ramayana;[1] Boyd's translation had appeared only a year before the publication of the third volume of Wheeler's history.[2] In contrast Wheeler's knowledge of the Indo-Muslim scholarship is very outdated. There is no evidence in his History of India that he was aware of Erskine's House of Taimur. He used Haji Mustafa's (Raymond) translation of the Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirin done in 1789 even though for the greater part used by him Briggs's translation done in 1832 was superior. His knowledge of the travel literature, of which, as we shall see later, he thought highly as source-material for the history of the Mughals in India, was very superficial. His reference to Thevenot's travels in north India is a telling example of Wheeler's

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[1] History of India, Vol. III, p. 102.

[2] Though it appeared in parts in the Indian Antiquary in 1872 (pp. 120-24, 172-182, 239-53), the Bombay edition used by Wheeler was published in 1873 and the third volume of Wheeler's history appeared in 1874.

superficial knowledge of his subject.[1] Had he read Thevenot's travels fully Wheeler would have known that Thevenot did not go beyond Ahmadabad in Gujrat.[2]

Thus, the differences in Wheeler's treatment of the Hindu and Muslim periods are striking. Towards the former his approach is academic and scholarly while towards the latter it is unscholarly. A placing of his work on medieval Muslim India against the background of his views on the future of India and British rule suggests that practical political considerations underlay Wheeler's apparently enigmatic treatment of Muslim Indian history.

The main impulse behind Wheeler's Indian studies, he states, was his concern for 'the present condition and future prospects' of India.[3] Hence, his historical studies cannot be separated from his views on the political future of India. Wheeler did not regard Indians as 'enemies to be conquered or foreign races to be maintained in subjection.'[4] Rather he saw them 'as fellow-subjects of Queen Victoria, to share with Englishmen, as speedily as may be, in those great heir-looms of self-government and free enquiry which our

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[1] History of India, IV, p. 479.

[2] Surendranath Sen (ed.) Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, New Delhi 1949, p. xix.

[3] History of India, II, p. 621.

[4] Adventures of a Tourist, 1868, p. 86.

fathers have won, after many a hard battle against despotism and superstition.'[1]

Wheeler considered that India could develop into a self-governed political state only after caste barriers had been destroyed and Brahmanical oppression had been thrown off by the people of India themselves. The narrow sympathies engendered by the caste system had always, he believed, hitherto prevented permanent political states from developing in India. In India, Wheeler writes, 'the old Roman sentiment of devotion to the common weal ... which is essential to the permanence of states and empires, seems to have been narrowed down to the caste, the village, or the family.'[2] This he ascribes to 'the blighting influence of Brahmanical oppression' which results in the rigid enforcement of caste rules.[3]

The rigid caste system not only narrowed human sympathies, it also curbed the freedom of the Hindus. Wheeler held that it confined them to 'the same hereditary grooves of profession and caste' generation after generation.[4] The caste system acting as 'an engine of ecclesiastic

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[1] Adventures of a Tourist, 1868, pp. 86-87.
[2] History of India, II, pp. 586-87.
[3] Ibid, pp. 586-87.
[4] Tales from Indian History, p. 200.

oppression' crushes all 'human passions and aspirations', which, in Wheeler's view,impart freedom to family life.[1] In his opinion, every action of a Hindu man 'as a husband, a father, a householder, and a citizen' is determined by 'the tyranny of caste rule.'[2] 'Family life and political life have always gone hand in hand' - so thought Wheeler.[3] The affections which 'impart freedom to family life' are also the springs of constitutional forms of government.[4] Therefore, it was essential for the regeneration of India that Hindu family life be freed from the grip of Brahmanical 'oppression and despotism'.

Wheeler's view on the regeneration of India taken together with his study of Indian history in order to draw lessons for her present and future provide a clue to the understanding of his mode of writing history. Since he is convinced that Indian society must escape from the clutches of Brahmanic despotism if it is to thrive, one may conclude that he was actuated by practical considerations when he distinguished the Vedic from the Brahmanic elements in the Hindu epics. By this disentanglement in the two epics which had 'universal influence' amongst Hindus, Wheeler no doubt hoped to impress upon Hindus that Brahmanism

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[1] History of India, II, p.4; Tales from Indian History, p.271.
[2] History of India, II, p. 413.
[3] Tales from Indian History, p. 269.
[4] Ibid, p. 271.

was a late development in their religion and that the 'national traditions' of the heroes of the epics 'have been (in fact) converted into vehicles for the promulgation of a theological and ecclesiastical system' by the Brahmans themselves.[1] Such findings, by discrediting the Brahmans would weaken their hold over Hindu mind. This interpretation of Wheeler's studies is strenghtened by his having distinguished the ideas and institutions of the two periods 'in as much as the two periods have for ages been blended into one in the belief of the people of India.'[2] The area of his study further supports the inference. Wheeler concerns himself only with those subjects, which, according to his own ideas, could bear on the progress of India. Political and social institutions, specifically relating to the family - he considered family as the nucleus of development - are given attention, while he studiously avoids subjects of mere antiquarian interest. Thus, for instance, topics such as the origin of the Vedic people, their line of march before they entered the Panjab - the topics which, as Wheeler himself mentions, had aroused great curiosity amongst his contemporaries - do not find more than a cursory mention in his work.[3] Wheeler's main interest in his study of Buddhism, to

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[1] History of India, II, p. lxxix.

[2] Ibid, p. 619.

[3] See Wheeler's comments on pp. 620-21, ibid.

which he devotes considerable space in volume three of his History of India, centres round the failure of Buddhism to dislodge the caste system from Hindu society - a point of vital significance in Wheeler's agenda for the regeneration of India.

It is apparent that Wheeler's conception of the future of India was one in which a regenerated Hinduism would be the vital creative factor to the exclusion of the Muslim factor. For him India was Hindu India. This was probably why at the outset of his studies he had ignored Indo-Muslim history.[1] He regarded Muslim rule in India as of only marginal importance to Indian Society. For him the history of Muslim rule in India throws 'little or no light upon the civilization of Hindustan, and but little on that of the Dekhan and Peninsula.'[2] This may in part make it comprehensible why Wheeler was indifferent to the civilization and institutions of Muslims in India when he wrote at length on such aspects in his history of the Hindus. But this does not explain his uncritical, almost credulous, attitude towards European travel literature on the Mughals.

Wheeler's attitude towards European testimony on Muslim rule in India was a facet of his attempt to 'rectify' the picture of Muslim, and especially of Mughal rule, presented by earlier historians. He thought that earlier historians had been mistaken in their assessment of Mughal rule.[3]

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[1] History of India, I, p.vi. [2] ibid, III, p.358, fn.1.
[3] ibid, IV, Part I, p. xi.

Indeed, they had been misled by Persian histories.[1] In his view, the history of the Mughal rule had been 'falsified' by his predecessors.[2] Wheeler, therefore, proposed to place the knowledge of Mughal rule in India on a 'truthful' basis of European testimony.[3]

Wheeler claimed that Persian histories were the work of 'parasites and party writers' and hence were unacceptable as evidence as they stood.[4] They were written by Shiah and Sunni writers in a partisan spirit. However, he excludes the pre-Mughal Persian histories from this category. The historians of the Sultanate period, Wheeler writes, 'generally told the truth. Occasionally they may have praised bad princes because they were good Mussulmans; otherwise they were honest and trustworthy. They were kept up to the mark by the influence of the Ulama.'[5] In his opinion, if the Sultanate historians had 'sacrificed truth to flattery, they would have exposed themselves to the scorn of the Ulama.'[6] However, under the Mughal rule 'these conditions were changed. When Akbar broke up the Ulama, public

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[1] History of India, Vol. IV, Part I, p.xi.
[2] Ibid, Part I, p. 272, fn.38.
[3] Ibid, pp. xi-xii.
[4] Ibid, pp. x-xi.
[5] Ibid, p. x.
[6] Loc. cit.

opinion degenerated into flattery and falsehood.'[1] Hence, Persian histories became increasingly unreliable as historical sources. Unlike Persian historians, Wheeler claims, European travellers had 'no temptation to depart from the truth.'[2]

The reasons adduced by Wheeler for preferring European testimony for the Mughal period over that of the Muslim writers are specious. In the first place the distinction he draws between histories written during the Sultanate and Mughal times as a distinction between histories kept straight by the 'public opinion' of the Ulama, and those which were not, is partially invalidated by an inconsistency in his views on the strength of the influence of the 'ulama. His opinion that the 'influence of the Ulamas has always been considerable; their opinion has generally had great weight with the reigning Sultan.'[3] is contradicted by his assertion that Alauddin Khalfi did not heed the advice of the 'ulama and that he 'cared for nothing so long as he was obeyed.'[4] Second, Wheeler was well aware in other historical contexts that the evidence of travellers' accounts could not be accepted at its face value. He himself had adopted a critical attitude towards Herodotus's observations most of which he

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[1] History of India, IV, p.xi.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Ibid, p.60 fn. 47.
[4] Ibid, p.60.

had regarded only as 'secondary evidence.' In assessing the reliability of Herodotus's observations he had taken into consideration Herodotus's sources of information and his range of experience.[1] Furthermore, Wheeler himself occasionally brings out the bias of European travellers. Hence the real reasons for his predilection for European travel literature for the history of the Mughals in India must be sought elsewhere. His predilection for European testimony on Mughal India was a facet of his deliberate attempt to paint the Mughals in dark colours.[2]

Memories of '1857-58' and an intention to write Indian history so that the British would learn the right lessons from it and then avoid actions likely to lead to a repetition of the revolt, give Wheeler's account of the medieval Indo-Muslim rule its peculiar colours and emphases. In this context it is significant to note that Wheeler's most absorbing and immediate concern was the continuance of British rule in India. Regarding the outrages committed by the British after the suppresssion of the revolt in Delhi in 1858 Wheeler could write: 'Sweet is revenge, let philanthropists say what they will; crimes such as mutiny and rebellion can be fitly punished by the sword alone'.[3] Wheeler was no altruist; 'regeneration' of India was secondary

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[1] Geography of Herodotus, 1854, p. xiv, 368, 517, 563.

[2] This aspect of Wheeler's history will be discussed later in the chapter.

[3] Adventures of a Tourist, 1868, p.35.

in his order of priorities. But although he claims to have undertaken to write the history of India with an eye on the future of the country he makes no practical suggestions for accelerating the progress of India. Rather his attitude was that of a believer in laissez faire in matters of social change; 'a people' so wrote Wheeler, 'will frequently cling to its time-honoured customs with a tenacity which is only increased by opposition, but which if left alone will gradually die out with the progress of enlightenment and refinement.'[1] In his view, 'very much depends upon the spontaneous action of the people themselves.'[2] Practical guidance, if 'practical guidance' be understood as necessitating positive action by government to bring about social transformation, was thus not the main motivation behind Wheeler's interest in the history of India.

Our contention that the future of India was not central to Wheeler's thinking on India is supported by the content of his work on British rule in India. Unlike Keene, Wheeler ignores matters not directly political in reference. Thus, for instance, Bentinck's education policy is mentioned cursorily while considerable space is devoted to his political transactions.[3] This omission is a significant indication

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[1] History of India, II, p.450.

[2] Tales from Indian History, p. 268.

[3] Short History of India, pp. 522-38. Bentinck's education policy is mentioned in passing under the heading 'Domestic Administration'.

of Wheeler's ideas on the future of India. From his writings it would appear that he assigned a prominent role to education per se for the regeneration of India.[1] But his indifference to Bentinck's education policy (surely a touchstone of concern) suggests that his published writings gave a false impression of his true attitude; this was one of indifference to the education of Indians - unless that education could minister to the interests of the British Indian government.

It is significant that the interests of British rule, as much as,if not more than the regeneration of India, governed Wheeler's preoccupation with caste and Brahmanism, the distinctive features of Hinduism as Wheeler saw it. He regarded the study of Hinduism as of 'vast political significance.'[2] It was so because he viewed the zeal of Hindus for their religion as their 'one political tie, one nationality, and one patriotism.'[3] Hindus had been politically disunited, but occasionally 'common superstitions and common fears seem to unite the people into a mysterious brotherhood.'[4]

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[1] That Wheeler assigned a prominent role to education in the regeneration of India comes out specifically from his Introduction to Bhola Nath Chunder's Travels of a Hindoo to various parts of Bengal and Upper India, London 1869.

[2] History of India, III, p.2. See also ibid, p. 587.

[3] Ibid, III, p.2.

[4] Loc. cit.

Such semi-religious outbreaks, which are not infrequent in India are sometimes followed by dangerous disturbances.'[1] Such occurrences had continued down to 'this day.'[2] 1857 was thus very much present in Wheeler's mind while studying the history of the Hindus.

'1857-58' had far greater and more direct influence on Wheeler's history of Muslim rule in India than it had on his history of the Hindus. The very purpose of Wheeler's undertaking to study the history of Muslim rule in India was the avoidance of another '1857'. He openly avowed that this study was not 'a speculative enquiry' but of 'pressing political importance at this moment' and of 'vast importance for all time to come.'[3]

For Wheeler the history of Indo-Muslim rule was of contemporary political importance because he regarded that history primarily as a record of Hindu-Muslim relationships. As these relationships naturally continued in the period of British supremacy, they were fraught with significance for British political strategy. Wheeler held 'the dallyings' between Hinduism and Islam to have been one of the primary causes of 1857 and, conversely the antagonism between the two religious communities to have been the main prop of the

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[1] History of India, III, p.308.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Ibid, IV, p.3.

British empire in India for nearly a century prior to 1857.[1]

This interpretation by Wheeler of the events which had so shaken the British empire explains why he undertook to study the history of that community, the Muslims, which he otherwise viewed as of marginal importance to Indian society. He looked to the history of the Indo-Muslims for contemporary political lessons. In the eighteen-sixties the British were deliberating on which courses of action could best utilize the 'natural' antagonism between the Hindus and Muslims to the advantage of British rule.[2] Hence Indo-Muslim history acquired significance from Wheeler's point of view.

Wheeler's purpose in taking up the history of Muslim rule in India defined the scope of his undertaking. It restricted the range of his interest to tracing the political manifestations of the Hindu-Muslim relationship in history rather than studying the social and religious repercussions of that relationship.[3] Moreover, with his interest centred on the stability of British empire in India Wheeler was not curious to know the historical development relating to the establishment of Muslim rule in India. He dismissed in one

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[1] History of India, IV, pp. 3-4.

[2] Hardy, P. The Muslims of British India, Cambridge 1972, pp.70-91.

[3] History of India, IV, p.3.

page the history of the so-called Slave dynasty. 'The Annals of the period', so wrote Wheeler, 'are inexpressibly wearisome. They tell of revolts which are without interest and of reigns which are without significance.'[1] Again, the Indo-Muslim history till the close of the Slave dynasty was 'one of conquest alone. It reveals no results of the collision between Mussulmans and the Hindus, beyond the destruction of idols, the plunder of temples, and the building of mosques.'[2] Muslim repression of the Hindus in the religious sphere, on which Elliot had expatiated, did not disturb Wheeler.

Wheeler considered the history of the Khaljis as constituting an important land-mark in the annals of the Indo-Muslims.[3] From the parts of Barani's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi then available in English, Wheeler was no doubt familiar with the fact that the Khaljis, especially Alauddin, formed closer links with Indian Muslims than their predecessors had been wont to do. In Wheeler's view the Khaljis thus allowed Hindu influence to develop at the court. He identifies Indian-born converted Muslims with Hindus - he treats Malik Kafur and Malik Khusru as Hindus.[4] The marriages of the

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[1] History of India, Vol. IV, p. 47.
[2] History of India, IV, p.48
[3] Ibid, pp. 50-51, 65.
[4] Ibid, pp. 66-68.

Khaljis to Hindu princesses was another factor responsible for the growth of Hindu influence at the Muslim court of Delhi.[1] This growth of Hindu influence, in Wheeler's view, led to 'a Hindu reaction' under the leadership of Malik Khusru. He asserts that so long as Muslim rulers continued to be 'orthodox, bigoted and intolerant', so long as the Hindus 'were compelled to stand on their defensive,' Muslim rulers were safe.[2] So long as there was 'no tampering with Hinduism, no intermarrying with Hindu princesses, no development of Hindu influences at the court and capital' Muslim rulers were safe.[3] But as soon as there was a change of policy, as under the Khaljis, Hindu revolt became inevitable.

Wheeler regards the 'Hindu reaction' of the thirteen-twenties merely as a precursor of more serious developments in the Deccan in the thirteen-forties. 'From the moment' writes Wheeler, 'the Mussulmans struck into the south, their political and religious life entered upon a new phase. Their history widened out into unexpected countries; they came in contact with fresh races and languages; .. they probably formed connections with Hindu women of the south; they leaned towards Hinduism and Hindus. The Hindu element told upon

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[1] History of India, IV, pp. 56-57, 65.
[2] Ibid, p. 80.
[3] Ibid, pp 80-81.

them; it rendered them impatient of the yoke of Delhi. A spirit of revolt was abroad which none could understand.'[1] The result was the breakaway of the Deccan from the centre - Wheeler's 'Shiah revolt.' Not only is Wheeler misinformed about the Shiah influence in the Deccan in the middle of the fourteenth century, but is also blind to the political motives for the breakaway of the Deccan from Delhi. He is thus, projecting his interpretation '1857' to the events of the fourteenth century. In reference to 'the Shiah revolt' Wheeler writes that the 'same game .. was played in 1857.'[2]

If Wheeler subconsciously projected his interpretation of 1857-58 to the events of the sultanate period, his picture of Mughal rule in India was consciously adapted, in the interests of British rule (as he conceived those interests to be), to his interpretation of 1857-58. For a proper understanding of this aspect of Wheeler's Indo-Muslim studies it is imperative to further elaborate his views on the events of 1857-58.

Although Wheeler reckoned '1857' to have been a semi-religious outbreak, he was well aware of the secular character of the revolt in Delhi. In fact, he explicitly distinguished between the mutinies in the army and the phenomenon of revolt

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[1] History of India, IV, pp. 80-81.

[2] Ibid, p. 83.

in northern India. He admits that:

> 'whilst the greased cartridges might account for the mutinies, it could not account for other phenomena such as the revolt at Delhi, and the proclamation of the Sovereignty of the Great Moghul. Neither could it account for the fact that many Hindus and Muhammadans joined (together) in the rebellion, or carried on secret intrigues with the rebel leaders, who were not sepoys and could not have been in any way inspired by fear of loss of caste through biting cartridges.'[1]

This phenomenon of revolt in northern India Wheeler ascribed to the charisma and tradition of the Mughal name amongst the peoples of northern India. It was significant from his point of view that the 'main fury of the storm was spent on Oudh and the North-West Provinces' - the heart of the Mughal empire.[2] The significance that Wheeler saw in the 'localisation' of the revolt is apparent from his comments that the revolt occurred and was largely restricted to areas 'associated with the memories of the Moghuls .. (and) crowded with relics of Moghul rule and glorified by traditions of the palmy days of the Moghul empire.'[3] It was his conviction that 'such is the power of a mere name, that generations after the Moghul emperor had been stripped of every shred of authority, his shadow of a throne became the rallying point of the mutineers in 1857.'[4] Wheeler

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[1] Tales from Indian History, p. 243.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Ibid, p. 244.

[4] History of India, III, p. 158, fn.6.

regarded it possible that if Lord Wellesly had 'extinguished the Great Moghul as thoroughly as Lord Hastings had extinguished the Maratha Peishwa, the mutinies of 1857 might never have occurred, Delhi might have been as loyal as Poona.'[1]

Wheeler set out to destroy this living tradition amongst Indians of the Mughul charisma in order to minimize the chances of another 1857. It is significant in this context to note that in 1876, the year in which part one of his Indo-Muslim history was published, Wheeler regarded the possibility of another revolt as quite real. Nearly twenty years had passed since the empire was shaken to its foundations in 1857 - an interval of nearly a generation. Such a period, in Wheeler's considered opinion, 'is of profound significance in politics. If a revolt has been suppressed, if the causes which led to it have not been removed, it is a moral certainty that it will break out afresh. The new generation forgets the punishment that befell their fathers; they are ready to risk another rising.'[2] And in Wheeler's view the causes which had led to '1857' were still operating in Indian society. Although Muslim rule had 'finally perished in the Mutiny of Fifty-seven' and the Muslims had 'ceased to be the paramount power', it was Wheeler's opinion that 'their

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[1] Short History of India, pp. 495-96.

[2] History of India, IV, pp. 82-83.

dominion still lingers to this day.'[1] Apparently, he shared the view held in some high official circles in the eighteen-sixties that there was a general Muslim conspiracy against British rule in India.[2]

Accepting, then, the possibility of another '1857' as quite real, Wheeler deliberately set out to traduce the Mughals. This he intended to do by calumniating the Mughal rulers individually and by imbuing their rule with such a character as would tarnish their image in the eyes of both Hindus and Muslims.

Wheeler's deliberate attempt to paint the Mughal rulers in the darkest colours comes out suggestively from his treatment of Shah Jahan whom Elphinstone had represented as 'the most magnificent prince that ever appeared in India' and one whose 'treatment of his people was beneficient and paternal.[3] Wheeler claimed that Shah Jahan's fame as 'a great and beneficent' sovereign rested on 'the fulsome flattery of Persian chronicles.'[4] In his view Elphinstone had 'falsified' the image of Shah Jahan by accepting 'the loose and prejudiced statement of the party writer' Khawfi Khan while ignoring the 'impartial testimony' of European

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[1] History of India, IV, pp. 24,27.

[2] For this conviction in some high official circles see P. Hardy's The Muslims of British India, Cambridge, 1972, p. 84.

[3] Elphinstone, History of India, II, pp. 396, 399.

[4] History of India, IV, Part I, pp. xi, 259, 272, fn.38.

travel literature which showed Shah Jahan as one of the 'most shameless tyrants'.[1] Wheeler's opinion of Shah Jahan is significant because it reveals his deliberate attempt to defame the Mughal name. For representing Shah Jahan as a tyrant he had to ignore, indeed reject, some very favourable observations on that ruler by Tavernier and Catrou - two of Wheeler's main sources. He criticized Tavernier for having called Shah Jahan 'the father of his people'. Wheeler explained that Tavernier's observations on this point were unacceptable because 'Tavernier was much smitten with the mania for flattery as later historians.'[2] Hence, his observations on Shah Jahan were 'base flattery.'[3] Similarly Wheeler rejected Catrou's observation - Catrou in whom he otherwise reposedimplicit faith - that Shah Jahan's wisdom was the admiration of the whole empire. Wheeler asserted that 'Neither Catrou, nor Manouchi, nor any other European would have written such non-sense. It is the language of an Asiatic; it was no doubt copied from the Moghul chronicles.'[4] He, thus, rejected his favourite 'impartial' evidence when it told against his cherished ideas.

Indeed, Wheeler twists and disregards his evidence to

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[1] History of India, IV, Part I, pp. x-xi.
[2] Ibid, IV, p. 251.
[3] Ibid, p. 265, fn.21.
[4] Ibid, p. 259, fn.14.

comply with his prejudices. He rejects Khwafi Khan on Shah Jahan partly because he was not a contemporary of Shah Jahan.[1] Yet he unhesitatingly accepts Bernier's stories about Jahangir as illustrative of 'the coarseness of Jehangir and his Court' despite the fact that Bernier too was not a contemporary witness to Jahangir's reign.[2] In complete disregard to the available European and Persian evidence - for instance Bernier, Tavernier and Khwafi Khan - Wheeler places Shah Jahan's death in 1664. In his view Aurangzib resorted to parricide to allay the possibility of Shah Jahan's restoration to the throne while Aurangzib was away in Kahmir. Aurangzib, who in Wheeler's opinion was 'case hardened 'against remorse and shame', 'worked himself into the belief that necessity justified the crime.'[3] The suspicion of this crime 'long tarnished his memory.'[4]

Before we discuss specific political implications of Wheeler's exposition of the nature of Mughal rule, it is important to point out that he aimed at a large Indian readership and that he consciously adapted the contents of his works to his conception of Indian requirements. In the preface to his Tales from Indian History, Wheeler wrote: 'I

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[1] History of India, IV, p. 272, fn.38.
[2] Ibid, p. 193, fn.4.
[3] Ibid, pp. 345-46.
[4] Ibid, p. 345.

know not only what the rising generation of Hindus are anxious to be taught, but also what it is desirable that they should know.' His colouring and shading was, therefore, carefully selected.

Wheeler depicts Mughal rule as non-Muslim rule. He explicitly distinguishes the Mughal from the Sultanate period. The latter alone, Wheeler suggests, could be properly regarded as a 'Muslim period'. During this period 'the religion of Islam was dominant throughout the Mussulman empire. The Sultans were mostly staunch Mussulmans.'[1] The Mughal period, however, had been 'wrongly called Mussulman.'[2] Throughout the Mughal rule, specifically during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, 'the Koran was neglected or ignored; many of the so-called Mussulmans were Sufi heretics; many affected open hostility.'[3] Wheeler points out even Aurangzib's 'breach of the Koran.'[4]

Wheeler's great emphasis on the non-Islamic nature of Mughal rule seems to have been intended to convince the Muslims of British India that the Mughals were immoral heretics. Despite his categorical assertions about the 'Muslim' nature of the sultanate rule and conversely the 'non-Muslim' and 'heretical' character of the Mughal rule, Wheeler

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[1] History of India, IV, Part I, Preface, p.x.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Loc. cit.
[4] Ibid, p. 323.

nowhere expounds what in his view constituted a Muslim state. In fact, an interest in such subjects is completely lacking in his Indo-Muslim studies, despite their academic interest as well as their practical relevance for him.

If Wheeler by representing the Mughals as non-Muslim rulers was trying to weaken the charisma of the Mughal name amongst the Indo-Muslims of his day, he was at the same time attempting to convince Hindus that despite appearances Mughal rule was not in the interest of Hindus. The apparent liberalism of the Mughals in religious matters, Wheeler ascribes not to their concern for the Hindus, it was rather 'the natural result of their covetousness. The Moghuls were the most grasping people under the sun. They lost nothing by not asking.'[1] Furthermore, Wheeler represents the Mughals as foreigners exploiting the Hindus. He states that the Mughal system of government was 'a monstrous system of oppression and extortion ... The Hindus were slaves in the hands of grinding task-masters - foreigners who knew not how to pity or how to spare.'[2]

In significant contrast to Wheeler's vituperative description of the Mughals, his observations on Islam in general and on the pre-Mughal Muslim period are almost free

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[1] History of India, IV, p. 125.

[2] Ibid, Part I, p.xi.

from animus and invective. He portrays the Prophet Muhammad as 'a reformer' in the context of his surroundings. The Prophet was, so wrote Wheeler, 'in reality at the head of a democratic movement against the Koreish, who were at once a hierarchy and an oligarchy.'[1] Also Wheeler praises some of the early Muslim rulers. Mahmud of Ghazna was not a mere iconoclast and brigand. Mahmud's memory, he points out, 'is associated with poetry and learning, with beautiful mosques, and famous schools and colleges in India.. He founded a university at Ghazni with a collection of curious books in various languages and a museum of natural curiosities.'[2] Throughout his history Wheeler manifests a predisposition towards Sunni Islam and looks at events from thier angle of vision.[3]

Wheeler's predilection for Sunni Islam and the Sultanate rulers appears to have been prompted by immediate policy considerations of currying favour with Sunni Muslims - who were in majority in northern India in the eighteen-sixties and seventies. It may be pointed out that the British government had decided to extend a hand of friendship to the Indo-Muslim community and that conciliatory measures to

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[1] History of India, IV, Part I, p.7, fn.7, see also p. 9, fn.8.

[2] Tales from Indian History, p.33.

[3] This comes out suggestively from his attitude towards his so-called 'Hindu revolt' in 1320s and 'the Shiah revolt', in 1340s. See pp. 65-76, 80-85 of the fourth volume of Wheeler's History of India.

this end were being considered and adopted. It is significant that Wheeler's predilection for Sunni Islam and the sultanate rulers and his hostility towards Shiah Islam and the Mughals did not express, in themselves, any religious bias. In the first place his partiality for Sunni rulers was not consistent. He was very hostile to the Afghans and also Aurangzib's Sunni beliefs did not exempt him from unfavourable observations at Wheeler's hands. Second, Wheeler had broad religious sympathies despite his belief that Indians must ultimately come within the fold of 'our faith' (i.e. Christianity).[1] His religious sympathies were broad enough to allow him to understand and appreciate 'heathen customs.'[2] Indeed his attitude towards religion was marked by scepticism. 'What is faith, and what is truth? The definitions are still wanting' - so wrote Wheeler after visiting the Jama Masjid at Delhi.[3] Thus there could have been no orthodox prejudice behind his predilection for Sunni or orthodox Islam or his hostility towards Shiah Islam even though he characterized it as immoral heresy.

The contemporary reception of Wheeler's History of India was very mixed. Professor Goldstucker, Professor of Sanskrit in the University College, London, credited him with 'tact

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1 Adventures of a Tourist, p.29.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid, p.39.

and skill, and 'ingenuity' in his analysis of the Hindu epics.[1] The reviewer in the Calcutta Review characterized Wheeler as a 'bold and original thinker'. In his view Wheeler 'is as careful in weighing his evidence and as judicious in drawing his conclusions as he is undoubtedly bold and ingenious in conception.'[2] Obviously this view of Wheeler's work was formed before the appearance of the fourth volume of his history which puzzled the reviewers. The Athenaeum regarded the fourth volume as 'a most interesting and most disappointing volume.'[3] The reviewer considered it a graphic historical novel in which matters of importance were ignored whilst 'comparatively insignificant facts' were 'magnified'.[4] Oblivious of the political considerations which underlay Wheeler's Indo-Muslim studies, some reviewers were at a loss to understand Wheeler's hostility to one phase of Islam and his predilection for another.[5] Yet another reviewer strongly criticized Wheeler's inconsistent use of his source materials.[6]

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[1] Goldstucker, T. 'Hindu Epic Poetry: The Mahabharata', Westminster Review, April 1868, pp. 387, 594.

[2] The Calcutta Review, 1875, p. 378.

[3] The Athenaeum, 1876, Part I, p. 528.

[4] Ibid, pp. 528-29.

[5] Ibid, pp. 528-59. See also, The Indian Antiquary, 1877, pp. 329-31.

[6] The Indian Antiquary, 1877, p. 331.

Contemporaneous reviewers thus mirror the enigmatic nature of Wheeler's Indo-Muslim studies. They failed to understand the motives which in fact imparted consistency to them. Looking for lessons in history and at the same time making his history a medium for political ends, Wheeler projected his interpretation of '1857' to his history of Muslim rule in India. Indeed, 1857 informed the selection of Wheeler's palette. His work thus breathes his own philosophy of history, namely, 'histories in general represent far more truthfully the spirit of the period in which they were written than the facts of the period to which they refer.'[1]

[1] History of India, I, pp. 106-7.

Henry George Keene

Henry George Keene (1825-1915) is intellectually the most interesting of the scholars included in this study. He brought to play upon medieval Indian studies some of the strongest currents of contemporary European thought. It is surprising therefore that Professor Eric Stokes omitted him from his paper 'Administrators and Historical Writing on India.'[1] Keene's work had indeed received some attention from Professor J.S. Grewal and Mr. K.K. Sharma,[2] but both have failed to indicate the interest of his historical writings for the British study of medieval Muslim India.

Keene came from a middle class English background, but with aristocratic connections. His paternal grandmother, Jane, was the sister of the first Lord Harris.[3] His father, Henry George Keene (1781-1864) started his career as a cadet in the Madras army in 1798. Through the influence of his uncle Lord Harris, he managed to get himself transferred to the Madras civil service in 1801.[4] Later he studied at

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[1] Philips, C.H. (ed.) Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, London 1961, pp. 385-403.

[2] Grewal, British Historians, pp. 173-75; K.K. Sharma, 'Henry George Keene' Historians of Medieval India, ed. by Mohibbul Hassan, Meerut 1968, pp. 271-74.

[3] DNB, Vol. XXX, 1892, p. 1193.

[4] Loc. cit.

the Fort William College, Calcutta, where he gained distinction in languages and other subjects. From Calcutta he again proceeded to the Madras Presidency where he wrote a book on law in Arabic for which the government awarded him ten thousand rupees.[1] In 1809 or 1810 he left the Indian civil service and returned to England to matriculate from Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge in November 1811. Four years later he graduated from the Sidney Sussex College and in 1817 he was admitted fellow of the College and took holy orders. In 1824 Keene the elder became professor of Arabic and Persian at the East India College, Haileybury, of which he afterwards became registrar. In 1834 he resigned his post and took up residence at Tunbridge Wells where he spent the rest of his life in local work and in literary activities.[2]

It was during the elder Keene's stay at Haileybury that Henry George Keene was born on May 16, 1825. Henry George Keene, the younger, spent the first ten years of his life in the environs of the East India College, Haileybury. His early education was at a privte school 'Romanoff House' where French was the main spoken language.[3] In 1840 he entered

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[1] DNB, Vol. XXX, p. 1193.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Keene, H.G. A Servant of John Company: Being the Recollections of an Indian Official, London and Calcutta, 1897, pp. 12, 16. Hereafter this work will be cited as John Company.

Rugby where he lagged behind the rest of the class. He left the school in 1842 without completing his studies.[1] He ascribes his failure at Rugby to his having had no preliminary preparation for composition in Latin and Greek on which much stress was laid.[2] Leaving Rugby, Keene was privately tutored for matriculation examination of the University of Oxford. In January 1843 he matriculated at Wadham (Oxford) 'and with such success as to lead me at once into the highest lectures'.[3] His father had intended that after graduating from Oxford he should go to the Chancery Bar in London.[4]

Though Keene seemed to promise well at Wadham, he soon neglected his studies. In his own words, he succumbed to 'a general tone of luxury and extravagance' that he found dominant at Oxford.[5] As did many other undergraduates of the University, Keene 'aped' the high living of the sons of the aristocracy and the upper middle class and 'I soon saw that I got into a set of conditions for which I had not the necessary self-control'.[6] His neglect of his studies reduced the

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[1] John Company, p. 24.
[2] Ibid, p. 21.
[3] Alumni Oxonienses, 1715-1886. Also Ibid, p. 25.
[4] John Company, p. viii.
[5] Ibid, p. 28.
[6] Loc. cit.

chances of his getting a fellowship at the college and hence he decided to leave Oxford. Keene mentions that his father wanted him to continue studying at Oxford whether he won a scholarship or not. However, Keene was anxious not to deprive his brother and two sisters of their share of such educational opportunities as his father might be able to provide. He therefore decided to give up Oxford. Keene now bethought himself of entering the Indian civil service.

The family were no strangers to Indian service. As already mentioned, Keene's father himself had served in India for several years. Keene, the elder, was reluctant to send his eldest child to India but was persuaded by his son that an Indian career, 'with whatever drawbacks was a sure and speedy means of provision.'[1] Ultimately Keene's father requested General James Lushington, one of the directors of the East India Company and a personal friend, to nominate his son to a Bengal writership.[2] Sir James Lushington acceded to this request.

Nominated to a Bengal writership, Keene entered in January 1844 the East India College at Haileybury completing his course of study in 1846.[3] In June 1847 he sailed for

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[1] John Company, Preface, p. viii.

[2] Ibid, p. 29.

[3] Ibid, pp. 29, 37.

India, landing at Calcutta in October.[1] It was intended that after his initial studies, Keene would be appointed to Lower Bengal.[2] However, during his stay at Calcutta he managed to get an exchange for the North-Western Provinces.[3] After completing his initial studies at the Fort William College, in 1849 Keene went to the North-Western Provinces where his first appointment was as assistant to the magistrate and collector of Mathura.[4] After nearly two years' stay at Mathura he was transferred to Mainpuri as joint magistrate and deputy-collector.[5] Early in 1852 he was transferred to Dehra Dun as assistant superintendent.[6] In the beginning of 1853 he was made joint-magistrate of Hariana, taking up residence at Hissar.[7] After eighteen months' stay at Hissar Keene officiated for a short time in 1854 as magistrate and collector of Saharanpur and was later appointed as joint-magistrate and deputy-collector of Muzzafarnagar.[8] In 1856 he was again transferred to Dehra Dun, where he was to remain for over three years as the super-

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[1] Ibid, p. 49, and H.G. Keene's Here and There: Memories Indian and others, 1906, p.39. Hereafter this work will be cited as Here and There. See also, Bengal Civl Servants, L/F/10/31 (1848) IOL.

[2] John Company, pp. 51-52.

[3] Ibid, p. 69.

[4] Ibid, pp. 96, 101.

[5] Ibid, p. 104.

[6] Ibid, p. 106.

[7] Ibid, pp. 110-11.

[8] Ibid, pp. 115, 119.

intendent of the district.[1] In 1859 he was appointed the magistrate-collector of Muzaffarnagar. It was under him that the settlement of the district was commenced in 1860 with Keene himself settling the parganas of Gordhanpur, Budhana and Shikarpur, before he went on furlough to England in 1862.[2]

Returning to India in 1863 Keene was appointed to be in-charge of Mainpuri but was soon deputed to officiate as judge at Allahabad where he was later appointed magistrate and collector. However, he exchanged Allahabad for Bulandshahr, giving his place at Allahabad to a friend who had recently got married and was reluctant to take his bride to a remote station.[3] Keene was at that time on his own; his wife had died during their visit to England and he had left his children in Britain for their education.[4] Keene remained at Bulandshahr for nearly three years with brief officiating appointments to other places including Aligarh.[5] In 1867 he again went to England - this time to marry.[6] On his return he was posted at Azimgarh as judge. His

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[1] John Company, p. 119.

[2] District Gazetteers of the United Provinces: Muzaffarnagar, compiled and edited by H.R. Nevill, 1920, Vol. III, pp. 138-39; John Company, pp. 175, 203.

[3] John Company, p. 229.

[4] Ibid, p. 213.

[5] Ibid, p. 234.

[6] Ibid, p. 246.

next appointment was at Fatehpur. In 1870 he was appointed the session judge of Agra, a post he was to hold till 1878 when he was transferred to the judgship of Meerut. Keene had to retire in 1882 even though he was anxious to continue for a few more years; the rules did not permit of service beyond thirty-five years. The same year he was admitted into the Order of the Indian Empire.

There are two noticeable features in Keene's official career. First, his experiences in India were concentrated on Hindustan. Second, the last fifteen years of his service in India were spent in the judicial branch of the administration, with a prolonged stay of nearly nine years at Agra. Both these factors influenced the life of Keene, the scholar. As we shall see later, he restricted the scope of his historical studies to Hindustan partly because he was best acquainted with that part of India. His being confined to judiciary between 1867 and 1882 gave him opportunity and time to pursue his literary interests - judges led a more settled life than it was possible for revenue officers to do. It was during his stay at Agra that Keene read extensively - readings and research which enabled him to write profusely after 1878.

Keene returned to Britain in November 1882. He led an antive life till the very end. He wrote several works after retirement. Also as his reminiscences - Here and There -show

he led a rich cultural life visiting art galleries, theatres, and operas. He was an active member of several clubs - the Athenaeum being one of them. He was often an examiner for Indian civil service examinations and occasionally also lectured on Indian history, presumably to supplement his annuity.[1] Once he gave a series of extension lectures at Oxford.[2] In the first two years after his return to Britain, Keene lived at Ealing, but in 1884 finding an opportunity of transferring the lease of their house, the Keene family moved to Jersey, which, Keene thought, was a place with 'better educational advantages, and otherwise more suitable for a large and growing family.'[3] However, with Keene's life centred around London they moved in 1890 from Jersey to Norwood in order to avoid constant 'crossings in all seasons to and from (which) were not only expensive, but distinctly disagreeable.'[4] In 1893 the Keene family left Norwood for the continent,[5] but towards the end of his life we find them living at Rosebank, Devonshire.[6]

Throughout his long life Keene wrote profusely. During

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[1] Here and There, pp. 160, 166, 169, 178, 205.
[2] Ibid, p. 154.
[3] Ibid, p. 120.
[4] Ibid, p. 170.
[5] Ibid, pp. 208-209.
[6] vide 'Administrations' for June 1915, Somerset House, London.

his stay at Haileybury between 1844 and 1846 he was a contributor to the College magazine. He wrote on 'legends and .. weird tales, and .. very promising poetry.'[1] Poetry indeed sustained his interest for the remainder of his life. During his voyage to and early years in India Keene wrote poems which were published in 1855 in the form of Ex Eremo: Poems Chiefly written in India (Edinburgh and London). Under the Rose, Poems written chiefly in India (1868) Peepul Leaves: Poems written in India (1879) and Verses written in idleness (1899) are four of Keene's several collections of poems. Indeed, in some quarters he enjoyed the reputation of 'a dexterous, melodious versifier .. (and) poet of genius.'[2]

Also Keene wrote articles and booklets on subjects of contemporary political and administrative interest. In 1854 he wrote an article - 'Young Bengal' - for Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.[3] In 1862 he wrote an article on the land revenue in India.[4] His articles 'Centralization: An

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[1] Memorials of Old Haileybury College by Sir M. Monier-Williams, F.C. Danvers and others, Westminster 1894, p. 279.

[2] Escott, H.T. (ed.) Pillars of the Empire, London 1879, p. 156. The article on Keene is by John Macdonald.

[3] Authorship vide Blackwood's Contributor's Book, PP. 8008 wf.BM.

[4] 'The Land Revenue of India', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. XCII, 1862, pp. 598-606. Authorship vide Blackwood's Contributor's Book, PP. 8006 wf. BM.

Indian Problem', 'Dehra Doon as a seat of European colonization', 'Limitations of Indian Liberty' and several others which appeared in the pages of the Calcutta Review are related to current political and administrative issues. In this category also must be included Keene's booklet Indian Administration: Letters to a Member of Parliament on the Indian Problem and its possible solution (1867). His monograph Fifty Seven: Some account of the Administration of Indian Districts during the revolt of the Bengal Army (1883) though not written with any specific political or administrative end in mind, was, nevertheless, prompted by contemporary political problems.

Keene's historical works, however, by far exceed his other writings. In 1866 appeared his first historical work on India, namely, The Moghul Empire from the death of Aurungzeb to the overthrow of the Mahratta power.[1] In 1876 the revised version of this appeared as The Fall of the Moghul Empire, An Historical Essay. In 1879 Keene published The Turks in India: Critical Chapters on the administration of that Country by the Chughtai Babar, and his descendants.[2] In 1885 appeared A Sketch of the History of Hindustan from the first Muslim Conquest to the fall of the Mughal Empire.[3] In

[1]Published by Wm. H. Allen & Co., London.

[2]Published by W.H. Allen & Co., London. Henceforth this work shall be referred to as the Turks in India.

[3]Hereafter this work will be cited as the Muslim Conquest.

1893 appeared his History of India from the earliest times to the present day. His Madhava Rao Sindhia published in 1901 was written for the Rulers of India series. In 1901 Keene published The Great Anarchy or Darkness before Dawn: Sketches of military adventure in Hindustan during the period immediately preceding British occupation. Besides these historical works, Keene edited Beale's Dictionary of Oriental Biograhy (1894) and wrote numerous articles for the Calcutta Review and some for the Dictionary of National Biography and Chamber's Encyclopaedia.[1] Also he published two autobiographical works, namely A Servant of John Company (1897) and Here and There: Memories Indian and others (1906). He also produced works completely unrelated to India - The Literature of France (1892) being one of them.

Of Keene's historical works the Fall of the Moghul Empire, Turks in India, Muslim Conquest, and volume one of the History of India deal with Muslim rule in India. Of his numerous articles 'Islam in India'[2] and 'Medieval India'[3] are of direct relevance for our present study. 'Religion in India', 'India's Place in Human Evolution' and 'Codification in India' also contain some observations on Indo-Muslim history.[4]

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[1] One of Keene's important articles for DNB was on Warren Hastings.

[2] C.R. Vol. LXXI, 1880, pp. 239-56.

[3] C.R. Vol. LXXV, 1882, pp. 173-98.

[4] C.R. Vols. LXVIII, LXIX, LXXII, pp. 199-220, 226-40, 383-403 respectively.

However, to illustrate Keene's views on the history of Muslim rule in India we shall draw from his works not related to Muslim Indian studies.

The Fall of the Moghul Empire covers the period from the death of Aurangzib in 1707 to the British occupation of Delhi in 1803, with greater part of the work devoted to the last forty years of the period. In the introductory chapter Keene reviews earlier Mughal rule. The Turks in India covers in nine chapters the history of India from Babur's conquest of the country in 1526 to the third battle of Panipat in 1761. It also contains a map of India illustrative of 'the territorial and fiscal' divisions of the Mughal empire in c. 1650.[1] It also contains a detailed explanation of the map itself. A Sketch of the History of Hindustan from the First Muslim Conquest to the fall of the Mughal Empire, though more comprehensive in scope than the Turks in India, is certainly not what the title would suggest. Keene's main emphasis is on the Mughal period and the earlier Muslim rulers are given summary treatment and dismissed in less than two short chapters. Nonetheless the Muslim Conquest is Keene's best work on Muslim rule in India. It is both based on a wider range of evidence and written more cogently than his other works on Indo-Muslim history. In his History of India though Keene included more materials on pre-Mughal

[1] Turks in India, p. vii.

period, he did not revise his general interpretation of the nature of Muslim rule in India. The primary significance of his History of India for our present study is that it presents Keene's views against a broad perspective of Indian history in general.

Keene wrote only about the history of Hindustan, the extensive Indo-Gangetic plain. Events not directly related to this area are carefully kept out of his work on the ground of their being 'foreign to our subject, which is the history of Hindustan.'[1] He concentrated on Hindustan not because he considered other regions of the subcontinent unimportant or uninteresting, but because he was best acquainted with Hindustan of the sub-continent. Moreover, he regarded the history of the entire sub-continent 'too wide and too complicated for his powers.'[2] Furthermore, it may be safely conjectured that Keene's having confined the scope of his histories to Hindustan was in part forced on him by the scantiness of source material then available for the history of the Deccan and south India. By then there was not even a detailed chronological framework for the history of these regions. Our conjecture is reinforced by the fact of Keene's having broadened his perspective so as to include some

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[1] Muslim Conquest, p. 194.

[2] Ibid, preface, p. xviii.

observations on the history of the Deccan and south India after the appearance in 1883 of Robert Sewell's Sketch of the Dynasties of Southern India, which was one of Keene's sources for the chapter in which he briefly touches on the history of the Deccan and south India.[1]

Keene's interest in literary activities from early life owed much to his family background and surroundings. Keene, the elder, was a writer and his literary tastes influenced his son.[2] Keene the younger was to mention much later in his life that 'my father being himself a scholar, had a high idea of learning' and that he 'gave me freely of his stores of knowledge.'[3] We find Keene, the younger, learning Greek and Latin at the early age of six.[4] Living on the college premises at Haileybury during the first ten years of his life, Keene was constantly surrounded by literary men - Malthus, Empson, Sir James Stephen and Sir James Mackintosh being some of the well-known literary figures teaching at the East India College, Haileybury, during Keene's early years. Later in his life he was to record vague recollections of

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[1] History of India, I, p. 49.

[2] Amongst his published works are: Akhlak-i-Muhsini, lithograph text and translation; one 'book' of the Anwar-i-Suhaili, also text and translation; Persian Fables, Sermons of Rev. W. Sharp with a memoir, and a book on Arabic law.

[3] John Company, p. 4.

[4] Ibid, p.5.

his meeting with these men.

Against this background it is not surprising that Keene's youthful amibition was to be a prominent litterateur. In his words, there 'still clung to the literary calling a kind of'Fro Diavolo' romance which had a strong fascination for a certain class of youthful minds'.[1] He professedly went to India 'less with the hope of becoming a Knight of the Bath than that of returning to a literary life in London on modest competence.'[2]

Keene's literary ambition is manifest in varied and desultory literary activities during his early years in India. He wrote poetry and miscellaneous articles in the eighteen-fifties.[3] His articles written at that time show that he read history, literature, political philosophy. Indeed, his articles make it evident that Keene kept in touch with some of the latest literature appearing in Europe.

For all his early literary interests, Keene made an effort

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[1] Here and There, p. 104.

[2] John Company, p. ix.

[3] See Keene's articles 'Proverbial Philosophy of Hindostan' C.R. Vol. XXVI (1856), pp. 345-54; 'Indian Ennui' and 'Accepted Traveller', C.R., Vol. XXVII, pp. 42-54, 279-313; 'The District Officer, N.W.P., His Miscellaneous Duties', C.R., Vol. XXVII, pp. 109-28; 'Rugby in India', C.R., Vol. XXXI, pp. 172-92; 'Centralization: An Indian Problem', ibid, pp. 466-84; 'Limitations of Indian Liberty', C.R., XXXIV, pp. 94-112. Authorship of these articles vide Appendix C.R., Vols 58-59 (1874-75).

to systematize his intellectual pursuits only after 1862-63. From this systematization there emerged a 'settled plan' and 'definite scheme' that were to influence his subsequent writing career.[1] Henceforth Keene was to concentrate on Indian studies and on a general understanding of social evolution.

This change in Keene's literary life was an outcome of two circumstances - a sense of disappointment in official career and his two visits to Britain in the eighteen-sixties. His reminiscences - John Company - show that he had a high opinion of his abilities and he felt that his official promotions were seldom in consonance with his capabilities. Indeed, Keene felt that he was penalized for his views and actions throughout his long official career. His disappointments in career date from 1857-58. During these critical years he was at Dehra Dun, a district comparatively unaffected by the revolt. Dehra Dun always had a sizeable European community which increased manifold with the arrival there of the families of British Officers engaged in suppressing the revolt. This influx into Dehra Dun posed a serious problem for Keene, the chief civil authority in the district.[2]

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[1] John Company, pp. 233-34.

[2] Kaye and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, London 1889, pp. 116-117. Keene's John Company, pp. 147-49.

The British officers often sent drafts against their pay to be drawn at the local treasury of Dehra Dun which was of course under the district officer.[1] The resources of the local treasury could not cope with continual demands of payment of such drafts despite some help from the Panjab.[2] With the interruptions and delays in communications between Dehra Dun and the provincial capital Agra, cash resources at Dehra Dun ran low. Keene, therefore - adopting a suggestion of Captain Tennant of the Engineers - issued paper money on his own responsibility.[3] In the uncertain circumstances of 1857-58 it was inevitable that the paper money should be accepted at heavy discounts.[4] As the local purchasing power of official incomes declined discontent and resentment naturally grew amongst British families at Dehra Dun. This led to complaints by the British residents of Dehra Dun against Keene to higher official authorities.[5] An immediate withdrawal of his paper money was ordered.[6] Although Keene later received the approbation of the government for his

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[1]Kaye and Malleson, op. cit., p. 118, John Company, pp.148-49.
[2]Kaye and Malleson, op. cit., pp. 118-19.
[3]Kaye and Malleson, op. cit., p. 119.
[4]John Company, 147-49.
[5]Ibid, pp. 149-50.
[6]Loc. cit.

hazardous act of having issued the paper money,[1] he nevertheless felt that his local influence and official reputation suffered greatly on account of it.

In Keene's view his attitude towards Indians during the revolt of 1857-58 further affected his career adversely. He states that European inhabitants of Dehra Dun charged him with 'lukewarmness' because of his 'incapacity to sympathize and concur in what I looked upon as injustice or indiscriminate revenge.'[2] Consequently,the Europeans at Dehra Dun invoked the censure of the government and an inquiry was ordered into his conduct on the ground of what he describes as, 'scandalous lenience' to Indians.[3] Although Lord Canning 'completely exonerated me, and afterwards expressed his positive approval' of Keene's conduct, Keene nevertheless felt that his conduct during the revolt proved a serious set back in his official career.[4]

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[1] In a letter dated 21st January 1859, the Accountant of the North-Western Provinces, appreciated Keene's paper currency in these words - 'the measures were highly successful,and he (Keene) deserving of the thanks of Government ... The fact of notes of any kind having been put and kept in circulation during the height of the Mutiny is very remarkable, and .. deserving of a place in history'. Quoted by Keene in his Letters to a Member of Parliament, 1867, p. 126.

[2] John Company, p. 150.

[3] Ibid, p.150.

[4] Ibid, pp. 150-51.

Keene exaggerates the effects on his career of his actions during the revolt of 1857-58. The fact that in 1859 he was appointed the magistrate-collector of Muzaffarnagar suggests that his conduct during the years 1857-58 could have caused but a temporary prejudice against him, if indeed any.

Keene was soon to suffer another disappointment in his official career. Returning from furlough in 1863 he was not appointed to Muzaffarnagar, the district of which he was making the settlement when he had proceeded to Britain in 1862. His having been deprived of the opportunity of completing the work he had begun was strongly felt by Keene and he ascribed it partly to personal malice of some high officials. It may, however, be mentioned that Keene's having gone away while the settlement was in progress was certainly held against him by the government even though his going away at that time was partly justifiable - Keene's family was suffering from bad health. This set back in Keene's career proved to be but temporary as he was soon afterwards appointed the magistrate and collector of Allahabad.[1]

Whatever the influence of these developments on Keene's official career, they greatly influenced his subsequent writing career. It is important from our point of view that Keene himself felt bitterly disappointed and dejected. He felt that his 'life was being blocked by obstacles beyond my

[1] John Company, p. 229.

control, and that my professional career was likely to be checked in every possible direction.'[1] Hence his sense of despair of ever gaining distinction in official career. Convinced that 'the prizes of public life were out of reach', Keene turned between the years 1863 and 1865 to literature in order to seek distinction.[2] He hoped that 'if the grapes of official distinction are sour, the life of a thinker may be sweet.'[3] It is interesting to note that through his writings he gained not only literary reputation, but also official distinction. He was awarded the Order of the Indian Empire partly for his work on Indian history.[4] He was conferred honorary M.A. in 1887 by Oxford University presumably on account of his literary activities.

Besides an intense sense of disappointment in official career, Keene's two visits to Britain in the eighteen-sixties proved to be of great consequence for his literary life. Following his first visit to Britain 'A certain fastidiousness

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[1] John Company, p. 234.

[2] Ibid, p. 233. It may be noted that his Fall of the Moghul Empire appeared in 1866.

[3] John Company, p. 233.

[4] Alfred Lyall, in recommending Keene for the honour of C.I.E. wrote - 'He has always worked a good deal at Indian literature, and his two historical books possess some merit', quoted in a letter from H.W. Primrose to R.H. Robart (Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for India), Ripon Papers: Correspondence with Persons in England, B.P/7/5, no. 130. B.M.

of taste' began to replace Keene's earlier desultory intellectual pursuits.[1] His visits to Britain undoubtedly widened his intellectual horizons and thereby influenced the nature and direction of Keene's subsequent study of Indian society and history.

In the eighteen-sixties there was a new intellectual ferment in Britain which could not have escaped Keene's notice. The British intellectual scene had undergone a striking change during his long absence from Britain with the publication of Spencer's Social Statics (1851), Principles of Psychology (1855) and the System of Synthetic Philosophy (1860-1896), Darwin's Origin of the Species (1859), Buckle's History of Civilization in England (1857-1864) and H.S. Maine's Ancient Law (1861) and the translation of Comte's works into English in the eighteen-fifties. The idea of development was, thus, being applied not only to nature, but also to the origin of man, his mind and to the history of civilization, including thought and religion. Thus by the time of his first furlough in 1862, the positivist approach to historical events - that is, seeing them as occurring in accordance with certain regularities or empirical laws -

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[1] John Company, p. 233.

was on the intellectual offensive.[1]

Keene was very receptive to these currents of thought. For him the ground had been prepared by the ideas of Montesquieu and John Stuart Mill. In 1860 he had regarded the latter as the 'Prince of living English thinkers.'[2] Keene's later writings, particularly his numerous articles which appeared in the Calcutta Review between 1878 and 1882,

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[1] My understanding of these and other writers mentioned in the next paragraph is based on the following works and articles- George Feaver's From Status to Contract: A Biography of Sir Henry Maine 1822-1888 (London 1969); K.B. Smellie's article 'Sir Henry Maine', Economica, 1928, pp. 64-94; J. Rumney's Herbert Spencer's Sociology (London 1934); H.E. Barnes's An Intellectual and Cultural History of the Western World, Vol. III (New York 1965) and An Introduction to the History of Sociology (Chicago 1948); Sir E. Barker's Political Thought in England 1848-1914 (Oxford University Press, 1951, 2nd ed.); Noel Annan's The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Thought (Oxford University Press 1959), Raymond Aron's Main Currents in Sociological Thought, 2 Vols, (Penguin Books, 1965-67); A.W. Benn's History of English Rationalism in the nineteenth century 2 Vols (London 1906), J.B. Bury's The Idea of Progress (London 1921) and A History of freedom of Thought (Oxford University Press, 1952, 2nd ed.); R. Flint's History of the Philosophy of History (London 1893); Morris Ginsberg's Essays in Sociology and Social Philosophy (1968); A.H. Huth's The Life and Writings of Henry Thomas Buckle, 2 Vols (London 1880); W.M. Simon's European positivism in the nineteenth century (New York 1963); L. Kolakowski's Positivist Philosphy from Hume to the Vienna Circle (Pelican Books, 1972); Leslie Sklair's The Sociology of Progress (London 1970); F.J.C. Hearnshaw (ed.) The Social and Political ideas of some representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age (London 1933).

[2] 'Limitations of Indian Liberty', C.R., Vol. XXXIV (1860), p.111.

show that during the years of the long hiatus in his writing career - 1866 to 1878 - he read extensively Spencer and Maine. Keene explicitly refers to their works in applying their concepts to Indian studies.[1] Later in life Keene was to know both Spencer and Maine personally.[2] It may be pointed out that Keene responded to the ideas of Comte, Tocqueville and Taine, too.[3]

Spencer's and Maine's theories, indeed, influenced the course of Keene's Indian studies. Maine, through his Ancient Law (1861), Village Communities: East and West (1871) and his Early History of Institutions strengthened manifold the already existing image of an unchanging Indian society. He saw in the institutions of India 'the infancy of our civilization'. This idea in contradistinction to Spencer's evolutionary and organic concept of society posed the fundamental problem of understanding why India had not emerged from 'the infancy' of civilization. To this end Keene directed his studies. His articles 'India's Place in Human Evolution', 'Religion in India', 'Islam in India','Codification in India','India in 1880', 'The Aryan Germ', 'Medieval India', published in the Calcutta Review

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[1] 'India in 1880' C.R., Vol. LXXII, p.4; 'The Foundations of Aryan Law', C.R., Vol. LXXIX, p. 57; 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p.174.

[2] Here and There, 117, 171, 185.

[3] Ibid, pp. 212, 238, 239; Turks in India, p. 152; 'Religion in India', C.R., Vol. LXVIII, p.210 fn; Muslim Conquest, p,243.

between 1878 and 1882 were all written for the purpose of understanding why and how India had remained in 'an arrested state of development'.

The general tendency of Keene's studies was an aspect of his concern for the future of India. For him the British empire in India whether before or after 1857-58, was not an end in itself. In 1856 he had disagreed with George Campbell's advocacy of 'healthy despotism' for India.[1] He regarded educating Indians for 'self-legislation and self-government' as the ultimate objects of British rule in India.[2] He entirely concurred with what he called the 'noble conception' of Elphinstone, namely, to prepare India for self-government.[3]

To be able to perform their task of preparing India for self-government effectively and successfully, the British must have, Keene held, a better knowledge of the Indian people and of their wants.[4] As early as 1856 he had wanted his countrymen to look beyond the India of the rajas,

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[1] Keene, 'Accepted Traveller', C.R., Vol. XXVII, p. 298n.

[2] Loc. cit. and Keene's article 'Limitations of Indian Liberty', C.R., XXXIV, 1860, p. 109.

[3] Keene, History of India, 1893, Vol. I, p. vi.

[4] 'Proverbial Philosophy of Hindostan', C.R., Vol. XXVI, January-June 1856, p. 345; 'Young Bengal', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. LXXV, 1854, pp. 648-49.

nawabs and the college educated youth.[1] He had emphasized that 'it is the people, surely; millions on millions .. it is of these that knowledge must be had ... The social life, the real motives must be unveiled.'[2] Keene, thus, advocated a closer and deeper study of Indian society.

In the eighteen-seventies such a study of Indian society for Keene, was tantamount to investigating 'Why the people of India have never risen to the conception of social and political evolution.'[3] From this perspective 'the history of India has yet to be written'.[4] Keene, therefore, undertook to give, in the light of recent sociological and historical thought, a fresh interpretation to Indian history.

Since history for Keene meant 'a scientific inquiry into the origin and progress of nations', his aim in writing a history of India was to state a 'rational view' of the 'whole growth of India.'[5] His purpose was, therefore, not only to discover new facts and narrate successive events, but to aasimilate and interpret materials. He studiously abstained from 'dwelling too minutely on the details of the

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[1] 'Proverbial Philosophy of Hindostan', C.R., Vol. XXVI (1856), p. 345.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 175.

[4] Loc. cit.

[5] History of India, Vol. I, pp. vii; Vol. II, p. 368.

battles, sieges, or the intrigues of high-placed individuals.'[1] Indeed, he avoids giving factual details and for these he often refers his readers to other histories,[2] reserving his own work for 'really operative facts.'[3]

Keene's concept of progress determines his criteria of 'operative facts', He uses the words 'progress', evolution and civilization interchangeably in relation to the history of India. In doing so he consciously constructs a framework based on Herbert Spencer's theories. It will, therefore, be necessary to discuss the main features of Spencer's sociological system. There are two main, and closely knit concepts which dominate Spencer's thinking. First, evolution for Spencer meant 'an integration of matter, and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity.'[4] Spencer accords primacy to the process of integration, that is, to 'the formation of a coherent aggregate.'[5] The second main feature of

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[1] History of India, I, Preface, p.vii.

[2] See, for instance, Turks in India, p.54; Muslim Conquest, p.190.

[3] History of India, I, Preface, p.vi.

[4] Spencer, H. First Principles, p.396, quoted in J. Rumney's Herbert Spencer's Sociology, London 1934, p. 242.

[5] Rumney, J. op. cit., p. 242; Sklair, L. The Sociology of Progress, London, 1970, p. 65.

Spencer's sociological system is his exposition of the two types of societies, namely, the military and industrial. The process of history, according to Spencer, involves the rise from the military to the industrial type of society. The concepts of 'integration' and 'types' are inseparably interwoven. At the outset society is assumed to have existed as an undifferentiated and unorganized horde. Political evolution consists in the integration of smaller groups and the corresponding formation of large cohesive territorial units. It is militarism which combines small social groups into larger ones, and yet larger ones and achieves social integration, which can pave way for the emergence of the 'industrial type'.

Spencer believes social cohesion to be achieved when co-operation between different units for a common end occurs. This common end for Spencer is peaceful industrial activity. Militariam by creating large territorial units 'widens the area within which an increasingly large proportion of the population is habitually at peace and industrially employed.'[1] The maintenance of social cohesion by force for industrial activity Spencer regards as an essential stage in the evolution of society. This, in his view, enables the races to acquire characteristics which

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[1]Barnes, H.E. Introduction to the History of Sociology, p. 114.

would lead to spontaneous co-operation.

Holding society together by force means maintaining 'artificial' and consequently 'unstable equilibrium'.[1] In Spencer's view how far and how successfully the artificial equilibrium in a society evolves into a spontaneous equilibrium depends largely on the nature of the constituent units and their intercourse.[2] Spencer points out that various races in Britain had been able to evolve a stable equilibrium of forces.[3]

Indeed, Spencer regards the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the races constituting a social aggregate as the most potent single factor which ultimately determines the nature of equilibrium in society.[4] He holds that races closely akin are more likely to form stable political organizations on mingling, than dissimilar races.[5] This phenomenon Spencer explains on racial grounds. Co-existence of different races 'with aptitudes for forming unlike structures' cannot evolve a social system based on spontaneous equilibrium of forces. To quote Spencer, 'Social constitutions of this kind, in which races having aptitudes for forming

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[1] Rumney, op. cit., p. 138.
[2] Ibid, pp. 78, 138.
[3] Ibid, p. 79.
[4] Ibid, p. 78.
[5] Ibid, p. 90.

unlike structures co-exist, are in state of unstable equilibrium.'[1] Even if two dissimilar races intermarry extensively, they are not likely to produce a stable equilibrium in society because the individual 'hybrid' 'inheriting from one line of ancestry proclivities adapted to another set of institutions, is not fitted for either.'[2] On the other hand social evolution is feasible where races are 'sufficiently alike to co-operate in the same social system, but sufficiently unlike to prevent that social system from becoming forthwith definite in structure.'[3] It may be pointed out here that Spencer's entire theory is based on the inheritability of acquired characteristics and his view that the experience of the race as a whole trascends the experience of the individual.[4]

Before we discuss Keene's application of Spencer's ideas to Indian history, we may briefly note the distinguishing feature of Spencer's 'military' and 'industrial' types. The form of co-operation amongst the units of society is the most remarkable distinction between the two types.[5] The military type is organized on the principle

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[1]Spencer, Principles of Sociology, I, p. 559, quoted, Rumney, op. cit., p. 78.

[2]Loc. cit.

[3]Rumney, op. cit., p. 79.

[4]Bury, Idea of Progress, pp. 340-41.

[5]Rumney, op. cit., p. 153.

of compulsory co-operation whereas spontaneous co-operation and self-discipline qualify the industrial type.[1] In the military type the needs of war predominate; industry serves solely to supply the requirements of the military set up; the aggregate supercedes the individual. The 'industrial type', on the contrary, is marked by peaceful co-existence and industrial development. The individual regains freedom and non-intervention by political organisation becomes the rule. In fact, 'industrial economic individualism' was the distinguishing feature of Spencer's 'industrial type.[2]

Keene approached Indian history armed with Spencer's concepts. It is, therefore, not remarkable that his main theme is the political and social integration of Indian society. His observations on ancient Indian history are limited in scope. The religious and literary studies of the period had not yet been placed in a firm chronological and dynastic framework. However, the knowledge of the existence of several small kingdoms at the time of Mahmud of Ghaznavi's invasions of India led Keene to conclude - he is using the phraseology of Herbert Spencer - that at the time of the establishment of Muslim rule, India

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[1] Rumney, op. cit., pp. 149, 270.

[2] Sklair, L. The Sociology of Progress, London 1970, pp. 65-66.

had not emerged from a condition of 'indefinite, incoherent, homogeneousness'.[1] He saw the early Muslim rulers uniting a considerable portion of India and founding an empire with Delhi as its centre. However, that empire was short-lived and in the latter half of the fourteenth century the power of the Delhi empire nearly vanished.[2] The empire being based, Keene thought, on force, it was held together only by artificial equilibrium of social forces. In this connection Keene's remark that early Muslim rulers of India employed 'suppression and hostility' for the purposes of cohesion is very suggestive.[3]

Keene held that the Mughals played a more significant rôle in the social evolution of India than did their predecessors. They consolidated a large part of India into an empire and thereby integrated the various regional states into a larger political entity. In Akbar's attempt to extend his empire beyond the Vindhya range of mountains Keene sees a possible sense of mission on Akbar's part to weld the subcontinent in a 'cosmos'.[4] Furthermore, if the efforts of earlier Muslim rulers had achieved limited success by 'negative' means (the suppression of hostility),

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[1] Muslim Conquest, p.6; 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. 71, p.248.
[2] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. 71, p. 249.
[3] Ibid, p. 250.
[4] History of India, I, p. 140.

the Mughal rulers acted positively to affect integration, with Akbar achieving the greatest success.

Keene did indeed regard Akbar's reign as 'the key-epoch of Indo-Muslim history.'[1] All that was 'vital and pregnant in the Musulman history is, in a manner centred in his reign and period.'[2] Keene discovered in Akbar's reign all that characterized Spencer's concept of evolution. Akbar gave unity to a sizeable portion of the subcontinent. He kept his empire intact by 'a standing professional army'. He created 'order' by 'strong but humane' military operations.[3] Besides unifying Hindustan and creating 'order' in his empire, the 'glory' of Akbar's reign, from Keene's view-point, was the 'fusion' of races.[4]

In Keene's view Akbar took positive measures to make fusion between conquerors and conquered feasible. He took steps to curb the overbearing and arrogant attitude of the 'immigrant aristocracy', while simultaneously cultivating friendship with the conquered.[5] He employed 'natives', both Hindus and Muslims, to high posts of trust and responsibility. In Keene's words, 'Akbar had the wisdom to conceive and the

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[1] Grewal. Britsh Historians, p. 174.
[2] Muslim Conquest, p. 266.
[3] History of India, I, p. 138.
[4] Loc. cit.
[5] Muslim Conquest, pp. 95, 98.

skill to execute, a compromise on both sides which went far to make Hindustanis a new and united community.'[1] He was successful partly because he made a serious effort to understand 'the tastes, habits and thoughts' of the subject races - this to Keene was apparent from Abul Fazl's Ain-i Akbari.[2] Akbar, in fact, went much further - he 'sympathized with their beliefs and prejudices, so far, at least, as they were not anti-social.'[3] The laws and literature of 'the people', that is, the Hindus, were studied and several important works were translated into the languages of the ruling elite.[4] Moreover, Akbar by abolishing discriminatory taxes -for instance, jiziya - brought both Hindus and Muslims under equal laws. By so doing Akbar went a long way in minimizing distinction between the two communities - he was, thus, attempting 'to fuse them in a common whole.'[5]

Keene held that an outcome of Akbar's policies was amalgamation into a nation of Hindus and Muslims. This was a great advance on the negative achievement of the earlier Muslim rulers, who had merely prevented society from

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[1] 'Islam in India', C.R. Vol. 71, p. 247.
[2] Muslim Conquest, pp. 265-66.
[3] Ibid, p. 162.
[4] Loc. cit.
[5] Keene, 'Codification for India', C.R., Vol. 72 (1881), p. 385.

falling asunder. The element of coercion diminished during Akbar's long reign, sympathetic co-operation became a habit. Hence, Akbar's great contribution was to provide a framework for the evolution of society from an artificial into a spontaneous equilibrium.

Akbar's son and successor, Jahangir, added little to Akbar's work.[1] But Jahangir enabled Akbar's achievements to strike deeper roots by leaving the 'status quo anté'.[2] In Keene's view, 'at least he did nothing to frustrate social integration.'[3] The empire 'continued to feel the momentum of Akbar's rule and fairly preserved its equipoise.'[4] But in Shah Jahan's reign Keene detects a change of tone. Shah Jahan, he holds, inaugurated a Muslim revivial without, however, persecuting the non-Muslims.[5] He continued fully to adhere to the principle of employing Hindus in administration which was 'a great channel of fusion.'[6] Indeed, in Shah Jahan's reign the number of Hindu nobles increased and more Hindus were employed in high offices than before.[7] Hence 'the equilibrium of the empire continued.'

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[1] 'Islam in India', C.R. Vol. 71, p. 251.
[2] Muslim Conquest, p. 165.
[3] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. 71, p. 251.
[4] History of India, Vol. I, p. 143
[5] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. 71, p. 251.
[6] Ibid, pp. 251-52.
[7] Ibid, pp. 251-52.

However, Shah Jahan's son Aurangzib disturbed the equilibrium of social forces by a deliberate policy of discrimination between the constituent social units of the empire. Discriminatory laws were established - Jiziya was reimposed on Hindus and a policy of discrimination was extended even to custom duties. Such distinctions were brought to meddle with judicial matters as well.[1] Even the revenue administration was 'pervaded with this pedantry.'[2] Despite his upsetting the equilibrium of social forces, Aurangzib was not 'able to alter what had been going on so long' - 'the union had lasted too long to be entirely undone.'[3]

The process of integration under the earlier Mughals was not confined to politics. It extended to language, literature and architecture. In fact, so far the process of social and cultural fusion was concerned, Keene was aware that the process had begun in the pre-Mughal times. 'The origin of the Urdu language', so writes Keene, 'which dates from this period (early Muslim rule), tells us that there must have been intercourse between them (Hindus) and the Muslims .... Using, as it (Urdu language) did, the Perso-Arabic character, and borrowing impartially from all

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[1] History of India, I, pp. 174-75; Muslim Conquest, pp.247-48.
[2] History of India, I, pp. 174-75.
[3] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. 71, pp. 250, 251.

current vocabularies, it became not only a means of oral intercourse but the vehicle of a considerable local literature. It fostered the increase of the intercourse between conquered and conquerors out of which it sprang; and its existence distinctly points to a stage in national life resembling the growth of English in the reigns of the Plantagenet kings of this country.'[1] In architecture, the fusion begun in early Muslim times, became complete under the Mughals. Keene cites buildings of Fatehpur Sikri and Man Singh's temple at Brindaban as classic examples of the fusion of Hindu and Muslim concepts of architecture.[2]

Keene, on the basis of personal observation, held social fusion to have reached such a point where 'we find the modern Hindustani character, with the domestic habits and institutions of the people, still retaining the impress of Mughal formation, and run in a mould which, after all that his happened since, is hardly yet altered.'[3]

In Keene's opinion social integration between conquerors and conquered became possible because they belonged to kindred races. He points out that Buckle was mistaken in believing that the Muslim 'system' in India was predominantly

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[1] Muslim Conquest, pp. 49-51.

[2] 'Islam in India', C.R. Vol. 71, pp. 250, 251.

[3] Ibid, p. 250.

Arab in character.[1] On the contrary, Keene says, Muslim power in India owed very little to the Arabs.[2] He showed that central Asian peoples founded Muslim empire in India and maintained it by a constant flow of immigrants from Persia and Afghanistan.[3] He regards the Mughals, who came from Transoxania and Fargana, as having first become 'Arayanized' in Persia and Afghanistan before coming to India. He maintains further that Islam had been introduced into India in the peculiar 'Aryo-Turkish' way[4] - in his own words, 'The influence was Islami e, but the Islamism was Aryanised, and acted on Aryans.'[5]

But despite the social fusion of various constituent units, Indian society, in Keene's eyes, failed to progress. Mughal rule proved incapable of giving Hindustan, let alone India, a cohesive political entity. In the latter part of the eighteenth century 'Hindustan was in a complete state of disintegration and approaching anarchy.'[6] Every considerable province had become independent, 'and the independence, in many instances, extended farther and was characteristic of districts and even townships.'[7] India

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[1] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. 71, p. 241.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Loc. cit.
[4] Ibid, p. 251.
[5] Ibid, p. 241.
[6] Muslim Conquest, p. 400.
[7] Loc. cit.

again needed a strong paramount power which could weld warring elements into a whole - a power which could 'enforce' equilibrium in Indian society.

British rule provided the requisite politically unifying force in the subcontinent. Keene had no misgivings regarding the fact of British rule in India. British empire in India, he held, like all other empires in history, rested upon the 'irrefragable base of conquest.'[1] Keene, following A. Lyall (1835-1911) held that Britain had founded the empire out of motives of self-interest - 'the company found itself unable to secure customers otherwise than by founding the empire.'[2] The British empire in India 'is not pehaps a question of right or wrong, but rather of fact.'[3] So far the history of India was concerned British rule was an 'essential stage in the social evolution of the various races, who people that vast and varied region.'[4] The significance of British rule for

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[1] Moghul Empire from the death of Aurungzeb to the overthrow of the Mahratta Power, 1866, p. 266.

[2] History of India, II, p. 392. See also Muslim Conquest, pp. 381, 402.

[3] Moghul Empire from the death of Aurungzeb to the overthrow of the Mahratta Power, 1866, p. 266.

[4] The Great Anarchy, 1901, p. xiii.

Indian society was that it held Indian society together, albeit by force. How the British rulers could help bring about 'spontaneous equilibrium' in India - the sphere in which the Mughals had failed - was an all-absorbing problem for Keene.

Inevitably Keene searched for clues in the history of Mughal rule to explain, why in his view, the Mughal empire fostered a social integration, but failed to achieve a long-lasting stable political equilibrium. Spencer's sociological system was inadequate in furnishing any conceptual framework for Keene's enquiries into why the Mughals had failed to set India on the path of progress. Spencer had no doubt singled out 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' factors which for him influenced evolution, but the relevance of those factors was for the origin and not the evolution of institutions. His sociology was mainly a method of describing changes in structure, rather than changes in sequence of events.[1] Hence in order to discover the reasons which had prevented India's rise to social and political evolution, Keene turned for ideas to writers other than Spencer.

He found stimulus in the ideas of Comte, John Stuart Mill, Buckle and Maine. Maine exerted a powerful influence

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[1] Rumney, op. cit., pp. 251-53.

on Keene as indeed on most students of society in the later nineteenth century. Maine's studies indeed bore a direct relation to the problem Keene was studying. Maine had postulated the existence of two types of societies - progressive and stationary. Stationary societies in Maine's view were those societies which had not emerged from the earliest stages of social development. Maine explained differences between the two types by way of jurisprudence. Indeed he analysed social phenomena in terms of legal conceptions. He assumed that 'the legal fruit is a fair index to the health of the social tree.'[1]

Maine held that the earliest societies were 'aggregates of families, not of single human beings but of groups'.[2] The entities with which the primitive law dealt were 'the patricarchal or family groups, as perpetual and indistinguishable.'[3] The second feature of the earliest societies was the nature of the law itself. Law was not a written statute, but unwritten 'tyranny of custom'. In its application it was marked by 'archaic formalism' indistinguishable from the rule of religion. Indeed, rule of law was not discriminated from the rule of religion. In Maine's view certain societies had not emerged out of

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[1] Smellie, K.B. 'Sir Henry Maine', Economica, London 1928, pp. 66-67.

[2] Feaver, G. From Status to Contract: A Biography of Sir Henry Maine, London 1969, p. 49.

[3] Ibid, p. 50.

primitive conception of law - such societies he regarded as 'stationary societies'. On the other hand progressive societies had been able to disentangle the individual from the blended rights of a community.[1] The progressive legal systems introduced 'liberating trends in the laws of persons' and simplified 'archaic formalism'. During the course of progress law passes from unwritten law and custom to statute law. The inevitable concomitant of this process is the loosening of the 'crust of custom' which precludes individuated relationships in stationary societies. Thus, as Feaver points out, for Maine the movement is 'from a condition of society in which all the relations of Persons are summed up in the relations of Family .. towards a phase of social order in which all these relations arise from the free agreement of individuals.'[2] In short the movement of progressive societies is from 'Status to Contract'. In the process of change, the rule of law becomes distinct from the rule of religion. It may be noted here that Spencer had also introduced Maine's concept of 'Status to Contract' into his 'military' and 'industrial' types.[3] His military

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[1] Feaver, G. From Status to Contract: A Biography of Sir Henry Maine, London 1969, p. 50.

[2] From Status to Contract, p. 53.

[3] Rumney, op. cit., pp. 154-56.

type was characterized by 'status' and the 'industrial' by 'contract'. But unlike Maine, Spencer did not account for the movement from 'status to contract' in terms of jurisprudence alone. In fact, he was not able fully to integrate Maine's theories into his own sociological system.

Applying Maine's concept of stationary and progressive societies to Indian society Keene found that Hindu society had retained the primitive conception of law whereby 'society has been considered as a group of corporate families, whose conduct is to be regulated by Divine-or semi Divine - ordinances enforced by excommunication.'[1] Keene, quoting Maine, observed that the 'Hindus had not passed beyond a stage which occurs in the history of all mankind, a stage at which a rule of law is not yet discriminated from a rule of religion.'[2] Similarly, in the Muslim system the secular and religious were inextricably blended. Keene held that Muslims claimed divine revelation as the ground of their legal system.[3] As a result, Indian society had never 'risen' to 'the conception of law as an authoritative arrangment of society through its representative the sovereign power.'[4] In this significant

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[1] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, pp. 173-74.

[2] Muslim Conquest, p. 123.

[3] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 196.

[4] Muslim Conquest, p. 123.

sphere Muslim rule had failed Indian society. In Keene's view Muslim rulers failed to weld India into one political entity because they neglected their legislative duties which constitute one of the main functions of the state.[1]

But not all Muslim rulers had been thus negligent. Shir Shah made a crude attempt to introduce a civil and criminal code as distinct from the law of Islam.[2] But even he did not attain to the office of legislator, the highest duty of a sovereign in Keene's eyes.[3] Akbar made the best effort before the British conquest to give India a 'rule of law' as distinct from a 'rule of religion'.[4] His rule was founded on 'positive' as opposed to the 'Levitical' law. He 'got his people to live under equal laws'.[5] Thus in Akbar's reign taxes on opinions disappeared.[6] In Keene's considered opinion Akbar formed a body of uniform laws whereby he 'sought to supersede the quasi-divine authority of the two great prevailing system among his subjects.'[7] The very fact that he appeared at the mosque

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[1] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 198.
[2] Turks in India, p. 142.
[3] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 186.
[4] Muslim Conquest, p. 123.
[5] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol.LXXI, p. 250.
[6] Ibid., pp. 250-51.
[7] 'Codification in India', C.R., Vol. LXXII, p. 386.

of Fatehpur Sikri as the 'Mujtahid of the age' was in Keene's view manifestative of 'a renunciation of Islam and its laws of supposed revelation'.[1]

For Keene the role of jurisprudence was not merely to secularise, but also to integrate society. That he saw jurisprudence as an instrument of integration is apparent from the significance he saw in Akbar's attempt to give India the 'rule of law' as distinct from the 'rule of religion'. By doing so, Akbar, in Keene's eyes, was seeking to 'fuse' Hindus and Muslims in a 'common whole'.[2]

Keene, indeed, attached great importance to integration by jurisprudence. He regarded a legal system as an organic bond between rulers and ruled. To quote him, 'It is only by embodying in the form of Statute the needs and aspirations of the community that a government can enter into permanent organic union with the governed'.[3]

It was the absence in India of such an organic bond between rulers and the ruled that had, in Keene's view, prevented India from evolving into a permanent political organization. He points out that the Muslim rulers of India had not given Indian society a body of statutory laws. He mentions that even Akbar had not risen to the office of legislator. Akbar's attempts in this direction were

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[1] 'Codification in India', C.R., Vol. LXXII, p. 386.
[2] Ibid, p. 385.
[3] History of India, I, p. 135.

restricted to 'issuing ordinances' rather than giving his empire a written set of laws through its representative, the sovereign power. It was this 'rejection or neglect' by Muslim rulers of their legislative functions that caused 'anarchy to succeed Akbar and Shah Jahan.'[1] Keene, thus, holds the failure of Muslim rulers to foster, through legislative actions, an organic unity between rulers and ruled to have been the main reason why India had not progressed politically under Muslim rule.

There is an inconsistency here between Keene's denigration of Muslim rulers for not actively fostering a cohesive political organisation and Spencerian, and thereby his own, doctrine that conscious acts of will and decision play little part in determining the direction of social evolution. This inconsistency in his thinking was due to his inability to reconcile Maine and Spencer on this issue. Spencer regarded evolution to be automatic and spontaneous whereas Maine ascribed the early progress of European nations to the legislative activity of the Roman emperors.[2] Finding it difficult to reconcile Maine and Spencer, Keene ended by holding contradictory views on the subject.

Keene undermined his own conclusion that the Muslim

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[1] 'Medieval India', C.R. Vol. LXXV, p. 198.

[2] Feaver, G. From Statute to Contract, pp. 144-45.

rulers were responsible for not uniting India organically by suggesting that such a unity was not feasible in Indian society.[1] Circumstances in India were unfavourable, he wrote, for codification and legislation which might supersede the 'personal laws' of the religious communities for a civil code to be applied uniformly to all subjects. Indeed, Indian society was not prepared for any such changes in the legal system. To quote Keene, 'the idea of law, as then conceived by the people of India, was inconsistent with legislation by any man or governing body.'[2] Shir Shah's 'crude legislation' proved futile for want of 'institutions' and 'ideas'. Akbar's efforts in this direction were rendered ineffective by the then existing 'conditions of time and place.'[3] In Keene's view Hindus and Muslims alike believed that 'each class had been born under a special provision of positive injunctions, revealed by the Deity - much like what are now called the 'laws of nature' in so far that they could not be altered by any authority of man.'[4] It is significant in this context to note that in concluding that India never possessed a 'progressive' system

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[1] History of India, I, p. 135.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] 'Codification in India, C.R., Vol. LXXII, p. 385.

[4] History of India, I, p. 135.

of law Keene ignored his own findings. He found that the Hindu legal system had undergone changes and that legal systems in Bengal came very near his own concept of progressive jurisprudence. He specifically mentioned the compilation of the Dayabhaga which he himself regarded as 'an amended book of civil law (Hindu)', adapted 'to the needs of modern society' with 'appeals to reason'.[1] Yet he concluded that under Hindu and Muslim systems 'there could be no human legislation, nor any state enactment by which social evolution could be registered or advanced.'[2] Keene was, thus, unable to modify his concepts according to his findings.

Believing that India had never possessed a progressive system of law, Keene held that Indians had never so far regarded society 'as composed of individuals controlled by the laws of a temporal sovereign.'[3] In other words, Indian society had not arrived at a stage where individuated relationships were feasible. Indeed, Indian society so far had not advanced from 'status to contract'.[4] Indian society was still struggling under the 'tyranny of custom' and 'archaic formalism'. But it was not necessarily doomed to

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[1] History of India, I, p. 107.

[2] Ibid., p. 107, 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p.196 .

[3] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 174.

[4] 'India's Place in Human Evolution', C.R., Vol. LXIX, p.238.

failure. In Keene's view India possessed a potential for progress because a considerable part of the population was of Aryan origin. Blind, along with many of his contemporaries, to the elusive character of the concept of race, Keene found reassurance that India would progress from status to contract in a sense of Aryan kinship between the 'progressive societies' of the west and societies of their blood brethren in India.[1]

However much Keene's earlier remarks on Muslim failure may suggest 'otherwise', he was opposed to any direct governmental interference to help India progress from 'status to contract'. In his view 'the social organism should do no more than keep pace with changes in surroundings.'[2] But 'the work of civilization may be done indirectly.'[3] In this task of civilising India indirectly, Christianity had no rôle to play in Keene's scheme of things.[4] In the form of Islam India had already encountered monotheism and hence Christianity had nothing new to offer to Indian society. It was Keene's opinion that monotheism in itself did not contain any inherent principles of permanence.[5]

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[1] See Keene's article 'Aryan Germ', C.R., Vol. LXXV, pp.1-23

[2] Here and There, pp. 135-36.

[3] 'India's Place in Human Evolution', C.R., Vol. LXIX, p. 237.

[4] See Keene's article 'Religion in India', C.R., LXVIII, pp. 199-220.

[5] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. LXXI, p. 251.

At best, it manifests only partial truth.[1] Keene points out that the monotheism of Islam had sown 'a seed of moderation' in the 'moral luxuriance' of Hindus, but without any appreciable results for progress.[2]

In Keene's considered opinion, scientific method alone provides a means of attaining complete truth.[3] India had never possessed 'the key to the palace of truth' because the Hindu mind had never looked in the direction of scientific method.[4] Consequently Keene suggested the diffusion of 'real practical scientific education' as indirect means of civilizing India. He asserts that scientific method alone could combat the forces of 'superstition, error, and stolid conservatism' in India.[5] In his view the work before the British in India was mammoth - 'even the labours of the French encyclopaedists in the last century are trifling as weighed against this.'[6] Keene's suggestion that diffusion of scientific method would facilitate progress in India is based on the assumption that scientific knowledge of the

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[1] 'Religion in India', C.R., Vol. LXVIII, p. 216.
[2] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. LXXI, p. 251.
[3] 'Religion in India', C.R., Vol. LXVIII, pp. 217-18.
[4] 'India's Place in Human Evolution', Vol. LXIX, p. 235.
[5] 'Religion in India', C.R., Vol. LXVIII, pp. 216-19.
[6] 'India's Place in Human Evolution', C.R., Vol. LXIX, p.238.

physical universe, by undermining the systems of metaphysical speculation in Hinduism, would create a breach in the social fabric whereby the whole social structure would eventually collapse.[1]

It is apparent that Keene saw progress as a concomitant of the advance of rationalism. In his view the whole framework of society in France was altered by 'Reason'.[2] In fact, he regarded rationalism to be the pre-requisite of progress in Europe.[3] Indeed, he considered the intellect to be the only known instrument of material, moral and religious progress[4] - a view held equally by Comte, John Stuart Mill and Buckle.

Regarding progress as a concomitant of the advance of rationalism, Keene was naturally curious to know how far Muslim rule had been conducive to the growth of rationalism in India. Akbar, Keene noticed, had waged a war against the preponderance of Islam in politics.[5] War against 'official orthodoxy' was a precursor of an intellectual movement marked by scepticism. Keene's

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[1] This comes out most suggestively where in his article 'Religion in India', he quotes Maine with approval - C.R., Vol. LXVIII, 218-19.

[2] A History of French Literature, p.7.

[3] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 198.

[4] 'Religion in India', C.R., Vol. LXVIII, p.219.

[5] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV,p.187.

'eclectic freethinker' was thus at the head of an intellectual movement attempting a liberation from the trammels of religion. However, this intellectual ferment was ephemeral and died with Akbar. No such movements marked the reigns of his successors.[1] The reign of Aurangzib was, in fact, barren of great ideas.[2] Thus India had so far not been continuously exposed to rational ideas which could have facilitated India's evolution. The Mughals had failed - even the British had not been successful. In 1867 Keene believed that 'the fanaticism and superstition in the country at large ... appear not at all abated'.[3] As late as 1879 he doubted whether 'real progress' had begun in Indian society.[4]

Besides rationalism, material progress occupies a prominent place in Keene's concept of social evolution. His interest in battering the 'forces of conservatism' in Indian society was embedded in his concern for material progress. He believed that it was essential to combat the 'tyranny of custom' so that 'Immobility alike of mind and body be turned into action; manufactures, mines, inland and outland commerce, must be free and encouraged.'[5]

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[1] History of India, I, p.135; 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol.LXXV, p. 195.

[2] Ibid, p. 162.

[3] Letters to a Member of Parliament, 1867, p. 89.

[4] 'India's Place in Human Evolution, C.R., Vol. LXIX, p.235.

[5] Ibid, p.238. See also Keene's article 'Rural life in Northern India', C.R., Vol.68 p.116

Though Keene looked to rationalism for India's progress, he yet accorded great importance to economic factors in such progress. An admirer of John Stuart Mill and intellectually stimulated by a pioneer British economic historian J.E.T. Rodgers (1825-90)[1], Keene grasped the importance of economic factors for material progress. He regarded the accumulation of capital - both at national and individual level - and the application of that capital in productive enterprise and trade, and the development of secondary wants in society, as 'at once the spring of industry .. and the cause of general progress.'[2]

It is important to understand in this context that the movement of society from 'status to contract' was itself a facet of Keene's ideas on material progress. To understand how it was so we must know the implications of Maine's theory of 'status to contract'. Maine's theory hinges on proprietary rights and is tantamount to 'a movement of the position of the individual in private law from status to contract'.[3] According to Maine society is held to be an aggregate of families on the basis of the joint-ownership of property with no scope for individuated contract. The movement of society from status to contract

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[1] Here and There, p. 187. It may be noted that Keene was personally acquainted with Rodgers-vide Keene's article 'On the Revenues of the Moghul Empire', JRAS, vol.XIX (1887) p.496 fn.

[2] Muslim Conquest, p. 112; History of India, II, p. 12.

[3] Feaver, G. From Status to Contract, p. xvii.

removes disabilities from subordinate members of the patriarchal family with regard to their acquiring and selling property.[1] Progressive law thus disentangles the rights of the individual and makes contractual property relations possible. This inevitably creates conditions favourable to free movement of capital, which in Keene's eyes was an essential condition for material progress. Trade, commerce, investment in industry, development of secondary wants in society all presuppose free movement of capital.

According great importance to economic factors, Keene naturally attempts to study the principles on which the Muslim rulers of India had regulated the economy of the country. He, then, devotes considerable attention to agrarian policy of Indo-Muslim rulers because 'the direct revenues of the state were derived from the surplus produce of the soil' and because trade, commerce and manufacture were marginal to India's economy.[2]

Keene studied agrarian policy of Indo-Muslim rulers from a perspective ignored by earlier historians of India. His main interest was to explain the principles of revenue assessment rather than narrating the details of the machinery of revenue collection. He wanted to know whether

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[1]Smellie, 'Sir Henry Maine', Economica, 1928, p.74.
[2]Here and There, p. 92.

Muslim rulers of India encouraged or discouraged, by their fiscal activities, the formation of capital in the hands of 'private citizens'. He saw no inherent harm in the state ownership of the land. It was his opinion that it was 'not the mere assertion of a public interest in land that was injurious (to material progress) but its undefined exercise.'[1] Hence Keene's interest in the principles of revenue assessment.

The pre-Mughal Muslim rulers, Keene holds, appropriated all the surplus produce of the soil.[2] They, thus, prevented the accumulation of capital in the hands of the ruled. Though the agriculturists owned the land, they were in reality (because of government's appropriation of the entire surplus produce of the soil) 'Taillèables et corvéables à merçi';[3] this led to 'the unlimited potentiality of the few'.[4] In Keene's opinion Shir Shah was the first Muslim ruler of India who 'perceived the benefit that might be expected from leaving a definite margin; and the recognition of the person who should be secured in its enjoyment.'[5] The determination of that margin, and the recognition of the person who should be secured in its enjoyment formed the

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[1] Muslim Conquest, pp. 242-43.
[2] Ibid, p. 160.
[3] Ibid, p. 160.
[4] Ibid, p. 112.
[5] Ibid, p. 160. See also Turks in India, p. 76.

basis of Shir Shah's revenue policy.[1] Shir Shah organized an 'elaborate' administrative machinery to carry out his agrarian policy - regular fiscal units were established, land was measured and surveyed and then regular assessment introduced.

In Keene's view Shir Shah not only perceived the advantages of leaving a part of the surplus produce with the agriculturist, but also grasped the principle of protecting the peasant. He took stern measures to minimize the misery brought upon the peasantry by undue exactions demanded by government officials and by frequent marches of the army which often destroyed crops - 'even in enemy's country neither the people nor their property was to be molested.'[2] Shir Shah's great concern to protect the peasantry and property even in enemy country indicated to Keene that 'the tillage was then dependent upon a scantily supplied labour market and a sparse population'.[3] Hence Shir Shah's policy of compensating the agriculturist for damages accruing from the movement of armies was grounded in the sound economic principle of not scaring the productive classes into migration.

Besides taking measures to encourage agriculture, Shir

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[1] Muslim Conquest, p. 160.

[2] Ibid, p. 81.

[3] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 187.

Shah tried to facilitate and further trade and commerce. He built roads and improved safety arrangements for travellers. Construction of roads traversing the empire and of inns with better safety arrangements than before could not but give a fillip to trade. Moreover, Shir Shah stipulated that customs on merchandise were to be levied only twice, once on the frontier, and once in the market - 'bad economy, but preferable to the usual practice of taking toll at every possible opportunity.'[1] Thus, Keene ascribed to Shir Shah 'the credit of having originated the attempt made by medieval rulers of India to do their duty to the country.'[2] He went on: 'no government -not even the British - has shown so much wisdom as this Pathan.'[3]

Keene describes Shir Shah's policies as falling in abeyance until they were revived by Akbar.[4] In his view Akbar's very greatness consisted in his following the example set by a successful rival of the family.[5] Todar Mal tutored in Shir Shah's 'wise principles', applied them to the agrarian system of Akbar.[6] Hence in Akbar's time, too, the state demand was defined and a part of the surplus

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[1] Muslim Conquest, p. 80.
[2] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 187.
[3] Turks in India, p. 42.
[4] History of India, I, p. 128.
[5] 'Medieval India', C.R., Vol. LXXV, p. 187.
[6] Muslim Conquest, pp. 109, 160; Turks in India, p. 76.

produce was left with the agriculturist. Akbar 'aimed at securing to the peasant the power of enjoying his property and benefits by the fruit of his labours.'[1] Akbar, moreover, took measures to bring more land under cultivation. Keene believed that during the interval between the reigns of Shir Shah and Akbar much of the land in Hindustan had fallen out of cultivation. Akbar's policies led to the cultivation of this land. During his reign land was surveyed, regular assessment carried out, and 'a Cosmos of orderly administration was created.'[2] The taxation was not oppressive and the method of collection became 'simple, skilful and inoppressive. In times of calamity .. suspensions and even remissions of revenue demands were allowed,'[3] - all measures aimed at encouraging agriculture. Also Akbar encouraged trade and commerce by abolishing several cesses and custom-duties.

In agrarian policy Jahangir and Shah Jahan followed for the most part in Akbar's footsteps. But Aurangzib reversed direction. He did so not by increasing direct land revenue as by reimposing Jiziya on the Hindu population. The levying of Jiziya, Keene holds, doubled the burden of taxation on the Hindu agriculturists, who formed the bulk

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[1] Muslim Conquest, p. 162.

[2] Ibid, p. 111.

[3] Loc. cit.

of the population.[1] In Keene's eyes Aurangzib's policy is, therefore, tantamount to appropriating the entire surplus from the land. The taxation grew more oppressive as the situation became politically unsettled in the eighteenth century - the period marked by internal strife and external invasions. In those unsettled circumstances the peasantry became the victim of irregular and heavier revenue demand.[2] The peasant was, thus, left with bare means of subsistence.

In Keene's opinion even during the period of more settled conditions under the Mughals, the income of the agriculturist 'seldom exceeded the means of subsistence.'[3] Hence, there could have been no possibility for the development of secondary wants and individual enterprise in India during the period of Muslim rule.

Although under Muslim rule the state appropriated the entire or greater part of the surplus produce from the land, the enormous wealth that accumulated was never used in productive enterprise by the ruling class. Keene underlines the fact that the 'national wealth' was 'either ostensibly squandered or hidden in unproductive hoardings.'[4]

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[1] Turks in India, pp. 155-6; Muslim Conquest, p. 249.

[2] See, for instance, The fall of the Moghul Empire, 1866, pp. 258-64.

[3] Here and There, p. 92.

[4] Muslim Conquest, p. 112.

To this effect he cites illustrations from the reign of Shah Jahan whose reign, he thought, exhibited the Mughal empire in its 'most prosperous and glorious condition.'[1] For illustrating how a sizeable portion of the 'national income' was expended on projects not at all profitable to the general welfare of the country at large, Keene refers to the construction of 'sculptured palaces for the residences of princes and marble monuments in the honour of their dead.'[2] Even when the works were apparently of public utility, they were not of much economic value to the people. For instance, the object of the canal built by Shah Jahan was not irrigation, but the provision of 'potable water into the palace.'[3]

It was this indifference of Muslim rulers to spending state resources in economically useful and productive ways and the concomitant absence of secondary wants - which was to be ascribed in part to the government's appropriation of the entire surplus from the land - which, in Keene's view, was responsible for India's lagging behind in progress.

The British were successful where the Muslim rulers had failed. Keene mentions that the British had succeeded in introducing material progress in India. He noticed that

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[1] Here and There, p. 92.
[2] Ibid, p. 94.
[3] Loc.cit.

'busy manufacturing and commercial communities' were thriving everywhere in India. The population which was sparse in Shir Shah's days had become dense; a large revenue was raised with a low rate of incidence[1] - observations based on the apparent assumption that agriculture was flourishing. This material progress was due to the British government's leaving a part of the surplus produce in the hands of the producer and to their economic policy of spending the national incomes on such projects as would be of economic value to the people.[2] Irrigation canals dug by the British in India 'insured' culturable land against drought; navigable canals made transportation of heavy goods easy.[3] The roads and railways reticulating the map of India helped trade and commerce.

Roads, canals, railways, and busy manufacturing and commercial communities indicated that India had passed in a few generations 'from anarchy to the reign of law'.[4] Keene's reign of law thus, connotes conditions conducive to peaceful industrial activity. It is, therefore, not surprising that Keene characterises the eighteenth century with its foreign invasions, internal wars and constant

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[1] History of India, I, p. 441.

[2] Here and There, pp. 96-97.

[3] Ibid, p. 97.

[4] Muslim Conquest, p. 463; History of India, I, p. 441.

movement of armies in India as 'Great Anarchy' or 'Darkness before Dawn.'[1]

Keene's conception of the primary duties of government follows as a corollary from his notion of progress as predominantly material advance. He counts among the foremost obligations of a government to its subjects, 'the protection of life and property, and that amount of security under which merchants will distribute the products of other countries and husbandmen raise the means of subsistence.'[2] An efficient standing army, is therefore, 'at once the symbol of civilisation and its potent instrument,'[3] - it would be the means of creating and maintaining 'order and discipline', essential for lively economic activity. Shir Shah and Akbar had succeeded in fulfilling their primary duties as rulers both by ensuring 'law and order' without which economic development could not be begun and by leaving the agriculturist a surplus at his disposal without which such development would be still-born.

It is apparent that for Keene the 'people' in the context of the history of India under Muslim rule denoted the peasantry, and the trading and commercial communities. In the context of the nineteenth century Keene looked to

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[1]This is the title of Keene's work covering eighteenth-century India.

[2]The Fall of the Moghul Empire, 1866, p. 263.

[3]Muslim Conquest, p. 162.

the 'potential bourgeosie' as the people.

Although Keene equates the progress of society with a movement from social relationships based on status to those based on contract and although he believes that such a movement in evolution would be accompanied by material progress, he nevertheless introduces other criteria of progress, not altogether integrated into his system. These are the criteria of artistic excellence and literary sophistication. Thus, for instance, he finds in the sculpture, architecture and literature of the Deccan and south India, evidence militating against the validity of Babur's remarks on the low level of civilization in India in the sixteenth century.[1] However, Keene does not correlate the material and non-material facets of progress. In fact, the two aspects are seemingly insulated from each other and often lead Keene into holding opposite views on the subject of progress in India. Simultaneously with his view that Muslim rule in India had been unable to contribute towards India's evolution, Keene maintains that Muslim rule was a 'positive gain' for India.[2] Here he is judging by the art and literature of the period of Muslim rule. He writes that

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[1] History of India, I, pp. 106-107.

[2] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. LXXI, pp. 240, 249, 251.

in architecture, Muslims imparted to Hindus 'the pregnant principles of the arch',[1] which was in Keene's view - he is quoting Fergusson - 'a more daring construction than the Hindus had ever attempted.'[2] Muslims also made a great contribution to literature through their historical writing; this was, in Keene's view, 'the greatest gain of all' for India.[3]

Even though Keene does not explicitly postulate any connection between the material and non-material aspects of progress, the correlation between the two in his thought is apparent. The use of 'daring' forms in architecture would manifest a progressive understanding of a complex principle, which, in turn would indicate the development of mind. It may be pointed out that Spencer regarded increasing complexity in form and organisation as evolution of mind. Again, the development of historical sense, in the form of histories, would be an advance in grasping relationships in time and space. Hence, it would be seen by Keene as an advance towards scientific-mindedness. Our inference that Keene would so view the development of historical mindedness amongst Hindus is reinforced by his having drawn his readers' attention specifically to the

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[1] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. LXXI, p. 248.
[2] Ibid, p. 249.
[3] Ibid, p. 251.

absence of historical literature - Rajatarangini being an exception - from the pre-Muslim literature of India.[1] This was seen by Keene as the indifference of the Hindu mind to 'concrete facts'.[2] This he correlates to 'the very love' of Hindus to the 'speculative philosophy' and to their taste for 'abstract reasoning'.[3] It was this habit of the Hindus 'of philosophising without a verifiable basis', that Keene hoped to undermine by a diffusion of scientific knowledge.[4] And as already seen, scientific knowledge was to be an instrument of material progress in Indian society.

It is abundantly evident by now that Keene's views on India are an eddy indicating the presence of several cross-currents of thought. This, as already discussed, led him into holding inconsistent views on various historical subjects. A closer look at this aspect of Keene's work reveals a fundamental conflict in his ideas. He began his studies armed with the concept that India was an 'unchanging', 'static', 'stationary' society which had not emerged from the 'infancy of civilization'. But his findings conflicted with his preconceived notions. His studies indicated the changing nature of arts, literature, architecture, the

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[1] History of India, I, p. 25.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] Loc. cit.
[4] 'India's Place in Human Evolution', C.R., Vol. LXIX, p.235.

principles of administration and of the organization of economy. He was constrained to conclude that concurrently with 'profound stagnation', the second feature of Indian society was its 'flexibility' - various races, religions and rulers had contributed towards that.[1] He was, however, unable basically to modify his concepts by his evidence. He reconciled his preconceived notions and his findings by suggesting that the 'flexibility' of Indian society had been superficial and that it had left India unchanged.[2] And this despite his assertion that Muslim rule 'had struck deep in every limb and organ of society (Indian): in art, literature, and language, no less than in political and domestic life'.[3] These findings had strengthened Keene's conviction that 'the past never returns; the kaliedoscope of life, unstirred, may long retain its pattern; but, when once it is shaken, new forms succeed, and the old arrangement, how long soever it may have endured, will never be exactly reproduced.'[4] But he still clung to the idea that India had remained unchanged.

Howsoever inconsistent and inadequate Keene's historical

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[1] Keene, H.G. 'India in 1880', C.R., LXXIII (1881), p.3.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] 'Islam in India', C.R., Vol. LXXI, p. 239.
[4] Loc. cit.

and sociological ideas might have been, they imparted a freshness to his Indian studies not to be found in the works of earlier historians of Muslim India. From his view that history is a 'scientific' study of the development of society followed his attempt (perhaps the first serious attempt by a British historian of Muslim India) to analyse and interpret his evidence as distinct from narrating facts from authorities - what Collingwood calls 'scissors and paste' history - an attempt that occasionally enabled Keene to gain new insights into already known facts. Thus, for instance, his understanding of Akbar's policy of employing Hindus in positions of trust and responsibility is superior to that of Elphinstone. Elphinstone had attributed this policy of Akbar's to the latter's 'liberal' religious views and to his desire of creating a 'national state'.[1] Keene, however, was able to discern that Akbar's policy of employing Hindus was in part related to the discontent amongst 'immigrant' nobility at Akbar's court.[2]

Another contribution of Keene to British historiography

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[1] It may be pointed out that Elphinstone no doubt refers to Akbar's struggle against his 'own military aristocracy', but he does not relate it to Akbar's policy of employing Hindus. See Elphinstone's History of India, 1843,II, p. 233.

[2] Muslim Conquest, pp. 95-100. See also History of India, I, p. 129. Keene writes: 'Akbar's experience of the insolence of his foreign followers was now becoming so serious as to lead him to look around for native statesmen and officers.'

of Muslim India was that he presented a more rounded picture of Indo-Muslim history than had been done by earlier historians. Through his concepts he was led to consider social, economic as well as political history of the period. For example, he discussed the principles on which Muslim rulers of India had regulated the economy of the country. Also he made an attempt to understand the influence of Islam on Indian society.

The work of Erskine, Elliot, Dowson, Thomas and Blochmann[1] gave Keene an additional advantage over Elphinstone, an advantage that is reflected in his superior scholarship. For instance, the availability of Abbas Khan Sarwani's Tarikh-i- Shir Shahi (through Elliot & Dowson) enabled Keene to give a more coherent and fuller account of Shir Shah than Elphinstone had been able to do.

Keene's superiority over his predecessors finds echo also in contemporary reception of his work. The reviewer of his History of India in the Athenaeum - oblivious of the inconsistencies and contradictions in Keene's thinking - wrote:

> 'Of all the summaries of Indian history published during this century, there are few indeed which for fulness, accuracy, clear exposition, pains-taking research, impartial handling of obscure

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[1]H. Blochmann translated in 1873 a part of the Ain-i-Akbari.

> and complicated themes, can compete, we think, with Mr. Keene's scholarly work.'[1]

Thus, Keene's History of India was able to supersede, in some quarters at least, Elphinstone's famous History of India which had held sway in the field of general Indian history since its first appearance in 1841.

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[1] The Athenaeum, 1894, p. 643.

Conclusion

Although medieval India emerged as a specialised study during the period under review, it was not a popular subject with the public at large. Not only did Erskine experience difficulties in finding a publisher, the reviewer of his work in the Spectator was sceptical of the usefulness of such large scale specalised studies as the House of Taimur. It was 'unreservedly admitted' by the reviewer in the Calcutta Review that the House of Taimur was very unlikely to be popular with the public. Elliot & Dowson had a very slow sale.[1] In contrast works on recent past or general histories continued to interest the British public. Whereas Keene's Turks in India and the Muslim Conquest never went through a second edition, his Fall of the Moghul Empire and the History of India went through three editions each. Similarly Wheeler's Tales from Indian History went through six editions within nine years of its first publication in 1881. Moreover, Elphinstone's History of India remained in great demand - new editions and reprints kept on appearing.[2]

1 See Edward Thomas's letter of the 6th of June 1871 to the Under Secretary of State for India, Financial Department Home Correspondence, L/F/2/386, no. 1435. IOL.

2 E.B. Cowell brought out the sixth edition of Elphinstone's history in 1866. He also edited the next four editions - the last one appearing in 1905. This last edition of Elphinstone's history was reissued in 1911.

New general histories such as J.C. Marshman's or H. Beveridge's also made their appearance during this period.[1]

Furthermore the Asiatic Society of Bengal consistently discriminated against publishing texts and translations relating to medieval Indian studies. In 1848 the Society's policy was not 'to confine our attention exclusively to Sanskrit literature, though it should .. form our principal staple'.[2] It is significant that only a quarter of the Bibliotheca Indica Publications of our period were texts/translations relating to medieval India; the remaining three-quarters were Sanskrit texts or their translations.[3]

The Society's concentration on Sanskrit texts was at least in partial fulfilment of the wishes of the Court of Directors and the Government of India. In 1856 the Court of Directors had disapproved of the Society's having

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[1] Beveridge, Henry (advocate), A Comprehensive History of India civil, military and social, from the first landing of the English to the suppression of the Sepoy revolt; including an outline of the Early History of Hindostan, 3 vols., London 1867. 1855-62
Marshman, J.C. The History of India, from the earliest period to the close of Lord Dalhousie's administration, 3 Vols, London 1869. 1867

[2] 'Minute on the Oriental Publications of the Asiatic Society', JASB, 1848, Part I, p. ix.

[3] This calculation is based on the list of the Bibliotheca Indica publications given in Sibadas Chaudhuri's Index to the Publications of the Asiatic Society, 1788-1953, Vol. I, Calcutta 1956.

published several works of 'Mohammedan literature'.[1] The Court of Directors made it clear that 'when we authorised the appropriation of a special grant to the encouragement of Indian literature, we had in view especially the literature of the Hindus, although we do not propose to exclude Mohammedan literature of local origin.'[2] The Government of India, too, was more inclined to encourage Sanskrit studies. In 1868 a grant was given exclusively for Sanskrit texts.[3] On the whole the government was more enthusiastic about the study of ancient than of medieval India[4].

What underlay the government's preference for ancient to medieval India is yet to be investigated. At this stage one may pose a few relevant questions - did the government see studies on medieval India, because of the proximity of the period to modern times, as potentially dangerous to British interests? Conversely, was ancient India because of its remoteness from modern times considered a safer subject

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[1] Despatch no. 41, dated May 18, 1856, published in JASB, 1856, pp. 427-28.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Index to the Publications of the Asiatic Society, 1788-1953, Vol. I, Part I (compiled by Sibadas Chandhuri), Calcutta 1956, p. xi.

[4] Voigt, Johannes H. 'British Policy towards Indian Historical Research and Writing, 1870-1930', Indian Economic and Social History Review, 1966, p. 139.

for historical investigations? That some such considerations could have informed the government's attitude seems likely. It is significant in this context that the government were not keen to patronize Maratha studies which they saw as a 'hot' subject for historical investigations.[1] Also they were reluctant to open to the public the records in the Peshwa's daftar.[2]

The academic world, too, showed preference for ancient over medieval India. In the whole range of British studies on medieval India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we do not find a name comparable to William Jones, Charles Wilkins, Horace Hayman Wilson, Henry Colebrooke or John Muir. For European scholars ancient Indian studies had a peculiar fascination that medieval Indian studies lacked. This was the fact that Sanskrit and certain European languages were discovered to be related. This discovery prompted subsequent work on the common Indo-European heritage and led to an extensive study of Sanskrit literature. Furthermore, as Prof. Romila Thapar rightly points out, 'There was an emphasis on the study of Sanskrit, since it was believed to belong to a period earlier than that of Greek, and thus to

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[1] Voigt, Johannes, H. 'British Policy towards Indian Historical Research and Writing, 1870-1930', Indian Economic and Social History Review, 1966, p. 141.

[2] ibid, p. 141.

be in a purer state of preservation.'[1]

There was yet another remarkable difference in the British historiography of ancient and that of medieval India. Attention to the study of Hinduism was the distinguishing feature of the former while studies on Islam were conspicuously absent from the latter. Why did the British scholars study Hinduism and not Islam? In Dr. Peter Marshall's view most investigators were drawn to Hinduism rather than to Islam because they believed themselves to be familiar with Islam.[2] Other explanations for the British scholars' preference for Hinduism and neglect of Islam also seem possible, indeed, likely. Studies on Hinduism seem to have been partly an aspect of the European scholars' enthusiasm for the study of Sanskrit. Moreover, is it not possible that the British scholars saw India as the land of Hindus and thought that Islam could be best studied in its classic environs (of course, on the erroneous assumption that Indian Islam was the same as Islam of Arabia or Persia)? Is it a sheer coincidence that we find regions having contacts with Persia, and scholars of Arabic producing some literature on Islam? In Bombay,

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[1] 'Interpretation of Ancient Indian History', History and Theory 1968, p. 319.

[2] The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge 1970, Preface, p. vii.

which had continuous contact with Persia, we find some work being done on Islam.[1] Thus A. Sprenger was an Arabic scholar and wrote on Prophet Muhammad and Islam.[2] Though not British, he was an employee of the company's government in India from 1843 to 1857 and was closely associated with British academic circles in India.

Why, one may ask, did the scholars studied in this thesis go against the tide and choose to study medieval Indian history? One reason is surely to be found in the nature of their experiences in India. It is clear from our study that the character of the mid- and late-nineteenth century British historical writing on India cannot be explained in terms of intellectual influences alone. The very fact that all scholars, studied here were part of the British imperialistic set-up introduced a variety of factors other than intellectual influences into their writings on medieval India. The importance of the fact that they became involved with Indian history only because careerist

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[1] J. Malcolm's 'Translations from the Persian, illustrative of the opinions of the Sunni and Shia Sects of Mahomedans', J.W. Graham's 'A Treatise on Sufism, or Mahomedan Mysticism' or James Ross's 'The fifth Sermon of Sadi translated from Persian' (Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay, Vol. I) may be seen as examples of work on Islam in the Bombay region.

[2] Besides his Technical Terms of the Sufees (1844) and Life of Mohammad (1851) Sprenger contributed several articles on Islam in JASB during his stay in India.

considerations had taken them to India or to Indian studies cannot be overrated. Erskine the 'gentleman scholar' who spent a considerable part of his long life on medieval Indian history is inseparable from Erskine the dissatisfied man to whom India provided an opportunity of making a fortune.

The scholars' very choice of their subjects of study was influenced by the contemporary political and administrative scene in India. William Erskine became interested in Aurangzib through a desire to study and understand the Marathas who dominated the political scene in the Deccan in which the government of Bombay was directly involved at the time of Erskine's going to India and his subsequent stay there. Elliot's interest in the revenue and fiscal history of Hindustan was an outcome of the making of the first long-term settlement in the North-Western Provinces in the eighteen-thirties and forties and with the concurrent investigation into the titles of the mafeedars in the province. The fact that in the eighteen-sixties the Government of India was deliberating upon the course of action which could best utilize the 'natural' antagonism between Hindus and Muslims to the advantage of British rule in India, induced Wheeler to study the history of Muslim rule in India despite his belief that the Muslims were of marginal importance in Indian society.

The nature of the scholars' Indian experiences often

determined the specific direction and the scope of their historical researches on medieval India. Elliot's work in the revenue department of the North-Western Provinces by powerfully stimulating his interest in certain sections at least of Indian society induced him to go deep into Indo-Muslim historical literature. Wheeler's work in the Madras archives resulted in his Madras in the Olden Times. His appointment as an assistant secretary in the foreign department of the Government of India for compiling and preparing memoranda on miscellaneous subjects led him to study Indian history in general. Thomas's presence in the North-Western Provinces, specifically his first posting at Saharanpur in 1837, was a major factor in fostering his interest in numismatics; nearness to Saharanpur of two ancient sites drew his attention to archaeology. Keene restricted the scope of his historical studies to Hindustan partly because he was best acquainted with that part of the sub-continent.

The official positions of the scholars and the nature of their duties affected their historical studies in yet another way. While Keene's being confined to the judiciary gave him some time for his literary activities, Erskine's duties as a police magistrate left him very little leisure for his planned history of Aurangzib. Elliot's position as the foreign secretary in the Government of India gave him

access to libraries not open to the public, while Erskine as a member of the Law Committee in Bombay gained an insight into the subject of land tenures, an insight which he turned to advantage in his accurate account of various rights in land during the Mughal times.

The scholars' personal experiences influenced and informed their ideas on Indian society, ideas which had vital implications for their views on Muslim rule in India. Wheeler's experiences in Madras and more his close association with the Government of India at a time of inflamed political, racial and religious passions in the eighteen-sixties, were very largely behind his belief that religion was the dominant force in Indian society. Keene, basing his views on personal observation, held that there had been deep social and cultural fusion amongst Hindu and Muslims of Hindustan - a view which ultimately resulted in his holding inconsistent ideas on the achievements of Muslim rule in India.

Thus, contemporary developments in India and the scholars' personal experiences affected both the course of their studies and the formation of their concepts. In addition, practical political considerations often played a significant rôle in their treatment and presentation of medieval Muslim rule in India. Elliot presented Muslim rule in India in the darkest colours for political reasons. His delineation in unmitigated terms of the injurious influences of the despotic Muslim

rule (observations which did not follow from his authoritarian concept of government) was aimed at the discontented Young Bengal who were very critical of British rule in the eighteen-thirties and forties. Elliot adverted to contemporary Muhammadan kingdoms (animadversions which strengthened his black picture of medieval Muslim rule in India) professedly out of academic considerations, but in reality to prepare public opinion for the future annexation of Awadh to the Company's government. Wheeler traduced the Mughals and imbued their rule with non-Muslim character in order to destroy the charisma and living tradition of the Mughal name amongst the peoples of northern India - a charisma which in Wheeler's view was dangerous for British rule in India.

Variations in the scholars' approaches and their attitudes towards Muslim rule in India as well as their emphasis on different aspects of medieval Indian history often followed from their views on British rule in India and from their conceptions of British interests in that country. Since for Keene the British empire was not an end in itself, but rather a stage in the evolution of Indian society, his Indo-Muslim studies were a facet of his concern for the future of India. His observations on Muslim rule in India were, therefore, free from the invective and animus that characterised the work of Elliot and Wheeler. The latter scholars giving primacy to British interests unhesitatingly deployed their historical

studies for imperialist purposes and painted Muslim rule in dark colours. Moreover their conceptions of British interests were behind their study of certain aspects of medieval Indian history. Elliot was anxious to treat historically the landed class in India because he saw it as a potential threat to British supremacy. Regarding as dangerous any permanent alienation of land-revenue in favour of the landed class and at the same time seeing any indiscreet resumptions as fraught with serious political consequences, Elliot felt the necessity of studying the history of the landed class in the interests of British empire in India. Wheeler undertook to study the history of Hindu-Muslim interaction and antagonism during the period of Muslim rule because he saw the stability of British empire in India linked with Hindu-Muslim relationship and antagonisms.

Nonetheless intellectual influences also played their part in creating interest in Medieval Indian history. Erskine became involved not only through the contemporary political scene, but also because of his ideas on social development. Upholding continuity in social processes, he viewed a thorough knowledge of Mughal history as essential for understanding the India of his day. His universal approach to history was behind his desire to know whether there were any analogies between the formation of certain kingdoms in Asia and the emergence of modern states in Europe. Under the influence

of the ideas of Spencer and Maine, Keene's concern for the future of India became identified with finding how and why India had remained in 'an arrested state of development'. His positivist approach led him to study medieval India for a closer and deeper understanding of the contemporary Indian society.

Although no major schools of thought dominated it, British historical writing of our period on medieval India shows a remarkable closeness to British, and also European, historiography in general. Erskine's critical appraisal of his sources almost foreshadows Niebuhr's critical historical scholarship. Elliot's search for sources must be viewed against the background of similar searches being carried out in Britain and Europe for historical sources. Thomas's numismatic studies form part of that growing interest in numismatics which resulted in the founding in many European countries of specialist numismatic societies such as the Numismatic Society of London (founded in 1836).[1] Differences in Dowson's and Keene's concepts of history reflect two streams of thought in British historiography - that of Carlyle, Froude and Freeman on the one hand and that of Buckle on the other.

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[1] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XVI, 1970, p. 762.

It is clear that these scholars were drawn to medieval India, though the interest was unfashionable, because of their intellectual disposition, their social circumstances, their experiences in India (especially the kinds of posts they held), the contemporary political situation, their views on British India and their conception of its interests. The factors that attracted them to medieval India also informed, it has been shown, their interpretation and treatment of Muslim rule in India.

Of course each scholar's idiosyncracies decided his individual approach. Yet, it may be argued, British scholarship on Muslim rule in India from the publication of Elliot's Bibliographical Index in 1849 to the appearance of Keene's History of India in 1893 constitutes a distinct phase in the British historiography of medieval India. The field of general history having been pre-empted by Elphinstone's History of India (1841) British scholars of the mid and late nineteenth century made specialised fields the focus of their historical investigations. While Elliot covered the whole of Indo-Muslim history, Erskine and Thomas chose only parts of it for their studies. Keene produced three monographs on the Mughals alone.

An essential accompaniment of such specalised studies was the scholars' quest for new materials. Erskine based his House of Taimur on extensive Persian materials hitherto unknown or unused. Elliot's main interest was Indo-Persian

historical literature itself, Thomas turned his attention to numismatic evidence and his researches further stimulated interest in the subject. Wheeler made an extensive use of European travel literature for his history of medieval India and himself published some old travellers' accounts.[1] Bibliotheca Indica Series by lithographing and translating several historical works on medieval India strengthened and at the same time symbolised the British scholars' search for new materials.

The progressive accumulation of source material since the publication of Elphinstone's History of India and the appearance on European intellectual horizon of new trends of historical thinking made a fresh general history of India desirable. Keene responded to the situation and the result was his History of India - the first general history of India by a scholar who otherwise concentrated on medieval India.

The content of the British historiography of our, and the earlier period, is predominantly political. Thus Erskine's House of Taimur is primarily a narrative of military and political transactions during the reigns of Babur, Humayun and Shir Shah. Elliot & Dowson concerns itself only

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[1] Early Travels in India, being reprints of rare and curious narratives of Old travellers in India, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, First Series, comprising 'Purchas' Pilgrims' and the 'Travels of Linschoten', Calcutta 1864.

with certain limited aspects of political history. Thomas's numismatic investigations are subservient to political history. The medieval Indian portion of Wheeler's History of India is chiefly devoted to politics. Keene's historical studies on India are also primarily political in content although there is a faint attempt to study non-political aspects, too. This trend in British historiography continued well into the twentieth century until the break-through came with W.H. Moreland's economic studies on medieval India.

Of course, the scope of the political history itself was very narrow. Most historians were unaware that political developments were inextricably related to social forces. Furthermore, they evinced disregard for political thought in historical processes. Not only did they ignore the working of government and the political idiom of medieval India, but also administrative and institutional history.

In fairness to the nineteenth century British historians of medieval India it must be pointed out that the dominant view of history in Britain was still political. Hence their conceptual limitations were the conceptual limitations of the British historiography of their time. But there is an extra dimension to the British scholars' indifference to institutional history of medieval India and it needs further comment. In India they encountered unfamiliar institutions and were unable to formulate new concepts which could enable

them to study them. Thus, for instance, the British scholars' failure to comprehend the character and organisation of non-hereditary nobility in medieval India partly explains why they never attempted to study the role of the nobility in the political life of medieval India.

The British scholars' interpretation of medieval India in terms of Hindu-Muslim relationship or antagonism manifests another fundamental conceptual limitation of the nineteenth-century British historiography of medieval India. Hindus and Muslims were seen as two distinct 'peoples' or 'nations' with the Hindus being equated with the ruled and the Muslims with the rulers. This equation indicates the inability of British historians to modify their concepts according to their findings. They found that Hindus formed an integral part of the ruling élite and also that there was a large Muslim community in India that was not part of the ruling class. Their failure to take account of these findings shows that they did not comprehend plural society, being interested only in 'nations'.

With all their limitations the British scholars of our period made varied and substantial contribution to the existing knowledge of medieval India. They rendered a great service to medieval Indian history by bringing new sources to light and by making those sources accessible to students of history. Moreover, they employed progressively better

techniques for interpreting their sources. In the use of historical sources Erskine revealed critical acumen remarkable for that period. He used interpretative and internal criticism for evaluating historical sources. Elliot and Dowson's was the first attempt to give a critical assessment of the Indo-Persian historical literature pertaining to medieval India. Keene subjected European testimony to a close scrutiny. He was the first to point out that Bernier's testimony was biased and hence to be accepted with great caution.[1] It was Keene who raised the question of the veracity of Manucci's evidence as mediated through Catrou.[2] He underlined the necessity of disentangling Manucci's evidence from the 'accessory matter' included by Catrou in The General History of the Mogol Empire from its Foundation by Tamerlane to the late Emperor Orangzeb (London 1709).

The use of hitherto untapped sources and of better techniques enabled our scholars to make considerable advance on the previous knowledge of medieval India. Elliot gave a more accurate and fuller account not only of Mir Kasim's activities in Sind, but also of Mahmud's Indian invasions. Thomas made noticeable advance on Elphintone so far as the

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[1] Muslim Conquest, p. 242; Turks in India, p. 162

[2] Turks in India, pp. 117-19.

history of early Muslim rule in India was concerned. In the Pathan Kings we find more factual information and more accurate chronology for the reigns of Iletmish and Nasir al-Din Muhammad and also a fuller discussion of Alauddin's fiscal measures than are to be found in Elphinstone. Also Thomas gives a fuller account of the successors of Firoz Tughlaq as well as of the Sayyids, who indeed had been summarily dismissed by Elphinstone in one page. Erskine's House of Taimur superseded Elphinstone in the reigns of Babur and Humayun while Keene was able to give a more coherent and fuller account of Shir Shah.

Keene's chief contribution consisted in throwing fresh light on specific issues. Not only did he give his readers better insight into Akbar's policy of employing Hindus in positions of trust and responsibility, but also added a new perspective to Aurangzib's reimposition of Jiziya by emphasizing the economic implications of that levy. His observations on the non-productive use of wealth by the ruling class in medieval India are still valid.

New subjects appeared on the scene - the Indo-Muslim numismatics and the statistical study of the Mughal revenues made their first appearance in medieval Indian studies during the period under review. Also we see the first attempt being made to study the principles on which the Muslim rulers of India regulated the economy of their empire. This set the

scene for W.H. Moreland when, nearly thirty years later, he introduced proper economic history into the study of medieval India.

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